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A Very Happy 40th Anniversary

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Opinion:
Top road trips, top rabbits and more
Gillian O’Reilly indulges in devising “top 10,” “top five” and other book lists.

News Roundup
CCBC Annual General Meeting: Save the Date; Judy Sarick (1939-2016); Virginia Davis (1933-2016); Small Saul selected for TD Grade One Book Giveaway; Sudbury is Reading Town!

Seen at …
A photographic look at book events.

Keep Your Eye On... Melanie Florence

Profile: Funny Girl Sharon Jennings
Aya Tsintziras profiles an author who lives, writes and advocates with humour.

Focus: Celebrating 40 Years!
A timeline of highlights, turning points and accomplishments in the Canadian Children’s Book Centre history.

Focus: Opportunities, Challenges and One Disappointment
After four decades, three publishers assess the future.

Heading Out for Book Week
Book Week first-timers talk about perseverance, otters, polar bears, world building and more.

Bookmark! Canadian classics through the decades
A selection of classic reads on the CCBC’s 40th birthday.

The Classroom Bookshelf
Books on child soldiers, teenaged fathers and advice for young activists.

Book Bits: Reaching for Beauty
Senta Ross reviews three new picture books about the lives of famous artists.

We Recommend
Reviews of the latest in fine Canadian books for children and teens.

Index of Reviews
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The Canadian Children's Book Centre is 40 years old! This anniversary is the celebratory theme of both the 2016 TD Canadian Children’s Book Week and this issue of Canadian Children's Book News. From our timeline of CCBC history to a list of “classics” to a fun “top 10” exercise, we are saluting our literary history. Our cover is the superb poster image created for Book Week by artist and designer Rebecca Bender (with the help of many wonderful illustrators). And you will be hearing more in the coming months about a special 40th anniversary fundraising dinner in September.

Over the last 40 years, the Canadian children’s book industry has seen ambitious projects, serious setbacks, unanticipated developments — and so much talent producing excellent and needed books. Reading through old issues of CCBN, it is fascinating to trace the history of both the organization and the industry — to see the early reviews of now classic titles, to read pieces by young authors describing their first book (hello, Teresa Toten) and to recognize the issues that come up again and again (the importance of teacher-librarians!).

As our readers know, the CCBC Board made the difficult decision not to publish a Winter 2016 issue of Canadian Children's Book News due to a temporary funding complication. This issue is our first of 2016; the summer and fall issues will follow our normal schedule.

And now to a personal note... After 20 years at the best freelance gig in the country, I am stepping down as editor of Canadian Children's Book News to focus on a few projects of my own. I have worked with amazing people during these last two decades, including longstanding reviewers, contributors and freelancers and wonderful people on the CCBC staff. Thank you, all.

Sandra O’Brien, the CCBC’s former Education Outreach Coordinator and a long-time freelance contributor to CCBN, will be helming the summer issue.

It’s been a lot of fun putting this issue together.

Happy reading.

Gillian O'Reilly

Your feedback is important!
EMAIL COMMENTS TO SANDRA@BOOKCENTRE.CA

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I am a sucker for the “Top 10” literary lists that appear in The Guardian: top 10 terrifying teachers in children’s books, top 10 worriers, top 10 badgers (it is a British newspaper) and so on. These are not necessarily the best books overall in a genre, simply the tops (in no particular order) in whatever quirky category the compilers pick.

Compiling similar Canadian lists is a game I like to play. Some categories, like hockey or dogs, offer an embarrassment of riches, and one has to narrow one’s objective to, say, “top five female hockey players.” Other categories offer only a few picks and some books are in classes by themselves.

In this, my last issue as editor of Canadian Children’s Book News, I am indulging in this habit and offering a selected list of Top 10s, Top Fives and some one-of-a-kinds.

In devising these lists, I have consulted and been grateful for the input of children’s book mavens Sarah Ellis, Jeffrey Canton, Helen Kubiw and the CCBC Library Coordinator Meghan Howe, but the final lists and omissions are entirely my own, and any howls of indignation should be sent my way.

Top Five Road Trips
Brian Doyle’s Up to Low makes the grade in so many categories — top books with recipes (onion sandwich) and best aunts and uncles in children’s literature, to name a couple. Here we celebrate the opening road trip, the agonizingly long and very funny drive to Low; it’s a gem of storytelling.

The drive across Canada in Vivien Bowers’ Wow Canada! makes inspired use of story in non-fiction as we join Guy and Rachel on a trip filled with historical tidbits, “Exceedingly Weird” facts, “Foods I Was Introduced to for My Own Good” and lots of humour.

Many more parent-organized expeditions with exasperated children can be found in the ever-enjoyable Travels with my Family series by Marie-Louise Gay and David Homel. Humour, a little suspense, a large convertible and a small chihuahua are part of the trek through northern Ontario in Ted Staunton’s Jump Cut in the Seven series. And, while not a road trip per se, the driving lesson in Staunton’s Acting Up offers a deliciously slow build to inevitable and comic disaster.

A short road trip comes in the form of a bus drive in Gordon Korman’s Schooled — because what middle school misfit wouldn’t like to take command of the school bus in an emergency hospital run?

Top 10 Rodents and Lagomorphs
(now that rabbits are no longer considered rodents)
Recently, in a Toronto subway station, I passed a group of parents and children watching a small rodent. “It’s the Subway Mouse,” they exclaimed, recalling Barbara Reid’s award-winning book and its hero Nib.

Who can resist Roslyn Schwartz’s Mole Sisters, an enchanting pair who revel in discovering the world around them — be it a piece of moss or some wavy wheat?

Rory, the intrepid mouse with itchy feet, is the star of Meghan Marentette’s charming and award-winning The Stowaways, illustrated by Dean Griffiths.

Kass Reich’s quirkily drawn but ever-so-busy hamsters feature in four (to date) board books, including Hamsters Holding Hands and Hamsters on the Go!

Ruth Ohi has drawn squirrels, mice and other creatures, but I am very partial to her guinea pigs in Clara and the Bossy and The Couch Was a Castle.

Werner Zimmermann’s illustrations of a somewhat bewildered rodent help make A Porcupine in a Pine Tree, written by Helaine Becker, into a Christmas classic.

A list of best rodents would not be complete without the ever-popular and ever-neurotic Scaredy Squirrel, created by Mélanie Watt.
By contrast, Mr. Peanuts, the star of Nancy Rose’s *The Secret Life of Squirrels*, boldly enjoys life to the fullest.

Moving on to the rabbit and hare family, we have the memorable and larcenous rabbit in Jon Klassen’s *I Want My Hat Back*, who, in good Victorian fashion, comes to a bad end.

More upstanding and definitely vital personalities are Polly Horvath’s *Mr. and Mrs. Bunny, Detectives Extraordinaire*, appearing first as confident sleuths and then as world travellers.

### Top Five River Trips

**Up to Low** again. The river trip toward the end of the book is an interplay of mystery, sadness, dignity, humour and, most of all, forgiveness and healing.

There is a Huck Finn quality in the journey of two young con artists (one of whom has no legs) in Kevin Marc Fournier’s *Sandbag Shuffle*, as they make their way down the Red River during the 1997 flood.

A summer day and three boys on a raft feature in Richard Scrimger’s *Into the Ravine*. Their episodic adventures on Toronto’s Rouge River have an Odyssean tone (with bikini-clad teens and a cougar mom standing in for sirens and Circe).

A winter day, three boys on an ice floe on New Brunswick’s Petitcodiac River — *Chocolate River Rescue* by Jennifer McGrath Kent is an exciting adventure and an excellent read-aloud.

Chris Jackson’s *The Gaggle Sisters River Tour* is full of goofy charm as we take a delightful trip down the Wriggle River with duck diva Sadie and her level-headed sister, Dorothy.

### Top 10 Immigration Stories

Dennis Foon’s brilliant play, *New Canadian Kid*, is a classic that endures. Also a classic, *The Day I Became a Canadian*, written by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet and illustrated by Song Nan Zhang, is a lovely walk through the citizenship ceremony.


Marsha Skrypuch has written many stories about immigrants to Canada, but *Call Me Aram*, a gentle tale about standing up for one’s identity in a new land, with illustrations by Muriel Wood, is my favourite.

*Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*, written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Simon Ng, is a classic collection that can be enjoyed by children and adults alike.

*Josepha: A Prairie Boy’s Story*, by Jim McGugan and Murray Kimber, is a deceptively simple and beautifully illustrated tale of economic realities and hardships.

Like Brian Doyle’s, Jean Little’s books could fit into so many categories. The story of Elspet Mary in *The Belonging Place* is a tale of learning how to be rooted in both the place you come from and the place you come to.

*The Sandwich*, by Ian Wallace and Angela Wood, is not exactly an immigration story but a classic tale of standing up for the food of one’s heritage. And Rukhsana Khan’s *Big Red Lollipop*, illustrated by Sophie Blackall, is a beautiful tale of coping with the expectations of parents and the customs of a new country.

### Top Five Folktales Retold

There have been many excellent books in this category and it is almost impossible to choose just a few. My list is reluctantly limited to these: *The Orphan Boy* written by Tololwa Mollel, illustrated by Paul Morin; *Bone Button Borscht* written by Audrey Davis, illustrated by Dušan Petričić; *Out of the Everywhere* by Jan Andrews, illustrated by Simon Ng; *The Trial of the Stone*, written by Richardo Keens-Douglas, illustrated by Stéphane Jorisch and *The Token Gift*, written by Hugh William McKibbon, illustrated by Scott Cameron.

**Best literary boyfriend:** Gilbert Blythe, who else?

**Best teen mermaid:** Jade, the plus-sized aquaphobic heroine in Hélène Boudreau’s *Real Mermaid* series.

**Best book to get a rise out of adults:** Many years ago, Sarah Ellis put *A Coyote Columbus Story* in this category. Judging by a response I heard recently, this remarkable book by Thomas King, with illustrations by William Kent Monkman, still can enchant kids and baffle grown-ups.

**Best book in a class by itself:** *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, written by Christine Baldacchino and illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant.

**Best funny aliens:** A toss-up between Norbert in Richard Scrimger’s *The Nose from Jupiter* and Welkin in K.L. Denman’s *Destination Human*.

**Best black-and-white picture book:** *Zoom at Sea*, written by Tim Wynne-Jones and illustrated by Ken Nutt.

**Best book set in southwestern Ontario** (*I grew up in Windsor*): *Elijah of Buxton* by Christopher Paul Curtis, but closely followed by E.K. Johnston’s *The Story of Owen: Dragon Slayer of Trondheim*.

**Best literary trip across Canada:** Not a book, but an achievement — Amy Mathers’ extraordinary marathon of reading. (See her summing up essay in the Winter 2015 issue of CCBN and visit www.amysmarathonofbooks.ca for all 365 reviews and blogs.)

As you can see, the possibilities are endless: top legal eagles in Canadian children’s books, best grandparent / grandchild relationships, top librarians, most evil villains, best birds, best books set in Africa, or top drummers. What about most overlooked children’s books or top 10 books that should be on every middle grade or high school reading list?

Play the top 10s game yourself. Devise your own categories and make your own lists. Share them with the CCBC and your colleagues. Have fun with the engaging characters, brilliant descriptions, thought-provoking and moving stories — all the treasures our children’s literature has to offer.

Gillian O’Reilly is the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.
CCBC Annual General Meeting:  
**Save the Date**
The Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre will take place on Monday, June 27, 2016, at the Northern District Branch of the Toronto Public Library.

Further details and information on nominations and the guest speaker will be posted on the CCBC website, and details will also be emailed to members.

**Judy Sarick (1939 - 2016)**
Bookseller, librarian, teacher-librarian, former CCBC Board member, passionate advocate for children’s books. Judy Sarick died suddenly on February 15.

Judy Sarick was a groundbreaking force in children’s books in this country. In 1974, she and her husband Hy opened the Children’s Book Store in Toronto, shepherding it through three different locations over the next 25 years and welcoming international and Canadian authors and illustrators for signings and events. Their pioneering act encouraged the opening of a number of children’s bookstores in the 1970s and 1980s.

Judy’s enthusiasm, knowledge, energy and high standards helped put children’s books on the public radar at a time when literature for young people, Canadian or otherwise, was not considered particularly important. She also encouraged Canadian publishers to produce books that could compete with the thousands of titles from the US and UK flowing into Canada each year. She ordered 250 copies of *Alligator Pie* (most stores ordered two) — and thus had stock on hand when the book became a runaway hit. She demanded that the new small Canadian children’s publishers improve the quality of their books if they wanted to be seen as professional, and she supported them when they did. From people she hired to people who discovered children’s literature at the store, she influenced the careers of writers, academics and others. Maria Martella, owner of Tinlids, a book wholesaler, managed the Children’s Book Store for 17 years. She recalls, “Judy Sarick empowered her staff and she taught me everything I know about being a bookseller. Her commitment to children’s culture and education was infectious, and her store was a place where people congregated and learned.”

Judy was one of the three original members of the children’s book panel on CBC Radio’s *Morningside*, along with Virginia Davis and Michele Landsberg. In 1991, she received the Claude Aubry Award from IBBY Canada for distinguished service within the field of children’s literature.

**Virginia Davis (1933-2016)**
The Canadian children’s book world is mourning the death of Virginia Davis — passionate advocate for Canadian children’s literature and friend of hundreds of children’s authors, illustrators, editors and publishers, as well as executive director of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre in its early days. Virginia died February 20 at the age of 83.

Virginia was born in North Carolina and taught in the US for several years before moving to Canada with her then husband and spending several years teaching in Winnipeg. It was when she began working as a part-time school librarian for the Winnipeg School Division that she found her true mission in life. Very soon she was appointed acting head of school library services for the provincial Ministry of Education. She was named executive director of the CCBC in 1981, and while she was only in this job for four years, it defined her and made her celebrated across the country.

Virginia believed profoundly in the potential in Canadian children’s books. She spoke at conferences and in workshops, and wrote exhaustively about the books and those responsible for creating them. Hers was not an uncritical eye, but she was always looking at the positive possibilities. She reviewed books for *CM* and appeared on the children’s book panel on CBC Radio’s *Morningside*. She was also twice a member of the international jury appointed to choose the winner of the biennial Hans Christian Andersen Award for children’s literature.

On leaving the CCBC, she moved to working for National Book Service, and then S & B Books — library wholesalers — where much of her work was devoted to selecting the best books for school libraries across the country. During her long career, she was vice-president of the Manitoba Library Association, president of the Canadian Library Association and president of IBBY Canada. In 1994, IBBY Canada presented her with the Claude Aubry Award for her distinctive service to Canadian children’s literature.

Virginia was a force of nature — brilliant, determined, always curious, connected to all who supported the great achievements of the Canadian children’s publishing industry.

A memorial event is planned for the spring.

— Peter Carver

**Small Saul selected for TD Grade One Book Giveaway**
Small Saul, written and illustrated by Ashley Spires and published by Kids Can Press, was selected for the TD Grade One Book Giveaway.

—continued on page 8—
1. At the OLA Super Conference in January: CANSCAIP authors gather for the annual CANSCAIP Mass Book Launch 2. Mass Book Launcher Jennifer Mook-Sang celebrates her new book, Speechless. 3. Ashley Spires and Binky the Space Cat are part of Reading Lights, a program of 20 permanent plaques around Vancouver featuring local children’s books and their authors and illustrators. It’s a project of the Vancouver Public Library in collaboration with CWILL BC (Children’s Writers and Illustrators of BC). Forty more plaques will be in place by 2018 4. Celebrating Judith Saltman on her retirement! At a gala dinner on March 4 in Vancouver, 12 speakers honoured Saltman’s roles as librarian, professor and children’s book champion. A scholarship in her name has been established for students in the MA in Children’s Literature Program at University of British Columbia 5. At the Atlantic Book Awards press conference and fundraiser: panelists Don Aker, Vicki Grant and B.R. Myers join (centre) Shauntay Grant and (right) moderator Ashley Nunn-Smith.
has been selected for the TD Grade One Book Giveaway for the 2016–2017 school year.

“I am thrilled that Small Saul has been chosen for this year’s TD Grade One Book Giveaway,” said Spires, an author-illustrator based in British Columbia. “It’s a wonderful way for so many children across the country to be introduced to Canadian books, and it’s a great opportunity for Canadian authors and illustrators, too.”

A program of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre, with sponsorship from TD Bank Group, the TD Grade One Book Giveaway provides a book to every Grade One student in Canada. Working with ministries of education, school boards and library organizations, the CCBC and TD distribute over 550,000 giveaway books each year. As part of the program, Spires will embark on a national tour in the fall of 2016, to visit Grade One audiences in schools and libraries across the country.

The books are available in both English and French; Éditions Scholastic is the publisher of Petit Paul.

Since 2000, almost 8 million books have been given to Grade One students nationwide as part of the TD Grade One Book Giveaway, and for many children, it’s often the first book they have ever owned.

**Sudbury is Reading Town!**

The National Reading Campaign’s 2016 Reading Town takes place in Sudbury, Ontario from April 30 to May 8. This is the third Reading Town celebration; previous ones were held in Moose Jaw and Charlottetown. For more information, visit readingtownsudbury.ca.

A complimentary Reading Town PEI celebration is taking place throughout Prince Edward Island, as well. It is being coordinated by a joint group that includes the National Reading Campaign, in partnership with Reading Town PEI, the PEI Literacy Alliance and the Confederation Centre Public Library. For more information, visit www.readingtownpei.com.

**Tell us about your newest book.** I’m so excited about my latest book, a young adult thriller, published by Lorimer, called The Missing! Like my picture book, Missing Nimâmâ, it addresses the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. A First Nations girl (Feather) watches helplessly as the police do nothing when her friends start disappearing or turning up dead. When her brother is arrested for the disappearance of her best friend (Mia), Feather decides to take matters into her own hands and sets out to catch the killer herself. You’ll have to read it to find out if she succeeds!

**Tell us about the process of writing.** It really depends on the project. Sometimes it comes really easily, and I can write a picture book in a day or a short novel in two weeks. Other times I can’t quite find the words or get into the character’s head and I have to set it aside for a while. But typically my process is just to sit down and write. I can always go back and edit later!

**How did you first get published?** I got very, very lucky. I had submitted a project to a publisher (Lorimer) for an Ontario Arts Council grant and was contacted afterwards to see more. I never actually ended up selling that one, but it led to two more projects with that publisher. I’ve since forged a long-standing relationship with them that has allowed me to publish some amazing books, including The Missing. I took some time off to raise my kids and got back into writing full-time a couple of years ago and have had some success since then. I have had the good fortune to sell books to other publishers that I have long admired, too: Second Story Press (I actually won their Aboriginal Writing Contest), Red Deer Press and Orca Book Publishers.

**What do you like about writing for young people?** I love how creative I can be! I love how enthusiastic children are about books and characters. I love that I can switch from writing something hilariously silly and write something heartbreakingly serious. I love reading my work in a classroom full of children and watching their faces and listening to them laugh or scream or gasp in shock. I believe they’re the toughest critics and the biggest fans of books.

**Tell us about writers who inspire you.** J.K. Rowling is a huge inspiration to me. I love her children’s and adult fiction equally. She’s such an amazing storyteller. Kenneth Oppel is incredibly talented. Neil Gaiman. There are so many in all genres!
The Maker movement celebrates qualities such as ingenuity, problem solving, collaboration, and thinking "outside the box." The Be a Maker! series inspires new "makers" to explore and experiment with the world around them. Each title in this timely series focuses on a field or area of interest, from robotics, graphic design, and animation to game design, music, and fashion. Several maker projects are featured in each book with step-by-step instructions and photography that guide readers through their own projects. Open-ended critical thinking questions encourage readers to consider how they might improve or customize their work.
Funny Girl
Sharon Jennings lives, writes and advocates with humour
BY AYA TSINTZIRAS

“How old are you?” “How much do you weigh?” “How much money do you make?” These are not the kind of questions that most adults would ask each other — but they are questions that hang out in a child’s mind. Sharon Jennings has heard them all. She loves visiting schools, doing readings and talking to the kids, not only for the fact that she likes to share knowledge but also because the kids are so funny. During one particular school visit, Jennings explained the royalty system to a group of children and tried to show how many books would have to be sold before she could head to the grocery store. One little boy considered this, put up his hand and asked, “What does your husband do?”

Jennings is an award-winning children’s book author of 60-plus picture books, chapter books, reluctant reader titles and middle grade novels. From the cozy kitchen of her west-end Toronto home, full of art and comfortable couches and two sweet dogs, she speaks candidly about her career. Her own story truly began in the early 1980s, when she moved from being the “Promotion Girl” at Harcourt Brace-Jovanovich to editing primary language arts books at Nelson. The parallel to her home life was perfect: by day she edited textbooks for young kids and tried to show how many books would have to be sold before she could head to the grocery store. One little boy considered this, put up his hand and asked, “What does your husband do?”

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The world of Canadian children’s books has come a long way since the 1970s, when Canadian books competed with the overwhelming number of American and British children’s stories for the small amount of space on bookstore shelves. Children’s book writers felt unwelcome in The Writers’ Union of Canada (and illustrators weren’t eligible). Thanks to the establishment of several children’s book publishers during the 1970s, as well as the CCBC (then called the Children’s Book Centre) in 1976, and CANSCAIP (the Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers) in 1977, the industry grew. The 1980s saw a further coming together. Since then, children’s literature in Canada has seen the good (increased awareness of children’s books, the creation of grant programs) and the bad (funding cuts, the loss of independent bookstores). And for over two decades, Jennings has been in the thick of it, advocating for Canadian children’s authors to stay connected to each other.

You could say Jennings has a love-hate relationship with the writing process. She absolutely adores writing, and yet her first reaction to coming up with a new story idea is “avoidance at all costs.” Then comes total misery, but eventually she sits down at her desk in her second-floor office and the words really start flowing. She can write several thousand words a day. She even approaches the state of being inspired with humour: “Once I start writing, I’m not thinking about anything else. I’m kind of in a twilight zone. I should not be driving a car because I’m in another world thinking about story. I find that so enjoyable that I say, ‘Well, next time you’re not going to avoid writing’ and then I do.”

Jennings’ two novels, Home Free, published in 2009, and the 2015 sequel, Connecting Dots, both published by Second Story Press, have a connection with her natural ability to excel at school visits with young children. “I’m a ham,” is how she describes growing up in children’s theatre and wanting to act and write. Both the sweet young protagonists of these books, Leanna and Cassandra, are actors and writers. Second Story Press editor Kathryn Cole says Jennings is a “real pro” when it comes to the editing process, and her writing style for both books is “very direct and straightforward. She writes with humour, even when the subject matter is serious, and that’s a thing young people enjoy.”

School visits allow Jennings to break out her silly side. Younger kids enjoy the repetitive nature of her first book, Jeremiah and Mrs. Ming, and the clever twist in 2010’s C’mere, Boy! when a dog searches for a boy to call his own. Older kids come prepared with impressive questions about her characters’ motivations and the writing process. The visits help her, too, as she can read her stories aloud and watch the reactions. Sometimes the endings don’t land as softly as they could, and she wonders if she should have written a little more. Other
times it’s during the act of reading out loud that she realizes what she could have cut or rewritten. She always has her young reader in mind when she writes.

Many writers supplement their solitary days at their desk with volunteering and teaching, and Jennings has a long history of good work in the children’s book community. She’s been a member of the CCBC since her first book and served on the board from 2009 to 2015. Now she’s serving her second term as President of CANSCAIP (her first term was 1997 to 1999). It’s a job that she adores because, besides supporting book launches and being in the know about what’s going on, she keeps in touch with other authors across Canada. “I get more back than I’m giving,” she says. “I’m making more and more connections with people in my community. There’s more coffee get-togethers, lunches, parties, more gossip,” she adds with her signature laugh.

As part of the Burt Award for African Literature, supported by the Ottawa-based NGO CODE, she has travelled to Kenya twice and recently went to Ghana to give writing workshops. One day, alone in her Ghana hotel room, she took her own advice to heart and looked at the novel she was writing, keeping in mind the story principles she was teaching her own students. She ended up reworking the book. For the past 11 years, she’s also been teaching writing at Ryerson, where the curriculum includes the work of fellow Canadian children’s authors.

It’s impossible to talk about the current state of children’s books in Canada without mentioning the competition for book deals, awards, reviews and the attention of not only readers but teachers and librarians, too. With all that comes a lot of rejection, something that Jennings talks about candidly. Her first experience with rejection was a perfect storm two decades ago. Her work wasn’t being accepted, a family member died, her entire family was reeling. The support of her writer friends got her through it.

“Rejection is just part of being an artist,” she says. “There will be people who don’t get what you’re doing. What I learned that time is that this will happen again. It’s that up and down, around and round.” She jokes that she argues with non-writer friends about how the writing life is so unique compared to working in a full-time, traditional 9-to-5 office. It’s a magical, mysterious lifestyle with everything — from whether an editor will accept your manuscript to the amount of each royalty cheque — completely up in the air. And yet, Jennings wouldn’t change a single moment of it.

Her own kids may be all grown up — Adrian is a 30-year-old chef and fine artist, Mia is a 26-year-old dancer and Guy is 28 and in the plumbing industry — but Jennings still feels she’s always growing. “I don’t feel old or stale,” she says. “I’m changing and I listen to what my kids are interested in. I know I don’t see what they see.” She visits art galleries with her son and goes to dance performances with her daughter, with whom she often chats about the creative process.

“Being involved with books for young people keeps you young,” Jennings says. “It keeps me humble. Kids are very honest and will say, ‘I didn’t like your book.’ They speak their minds and I just laugh. I just laugh all the time.”

Aya Tsintziras is a Toronto writer.

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Selected Recent Titles by Sharon Jennings

Connecting Dots
Second Story Press, 2015

The Warning
High Interest Publishing, 2014

Lost
High Interest Publishing, 2012

C’mere, Boy!
illustrated by Ashley Spires
Kids Can Press, 2010

A Chanukah Noel
illustrated by Gillian Newland
Second Story Press, 2010

Bats on Break
(HIP-Jr.)
High Interest Publishing, 2010

Home Free
Second Story Press, 2009

Wiggle Giggle Tickle Train
co-authored by Nora Hilb
illustrated by Nora Hilb
photographed by Marcela Cabezas Hilb
Annick Press, 2009

Jingle Bats
(HIP-Jr.)
High Interest Publishing, 2007

Bear Cub and Mama
illustrated by Mélanie Watt
Kids Can Press, 2007
40 Years On
MILESTONES AT THE CCBC

Forty years have gone by since the Canadian Children’s Book Centre opened its doors (and five years of preparation went into getting to that inaugural year in 1976). The intent of the planners was to set up an organization that would represent all facets of the children’s book world, bringing together librarians, authors, booksellers, publishers and others in a broadly based group.

The past four decades have seen the growth and development of remarkable publishing houses, the ongoing careers of many superb writers and illustrators, the enthusiastic rise in and grinding challenges to fine bookstores supporting Canadian children’s books, the building of children’s magazines, the establishment of important awards, excellent family literacy programs and highly successful festivals — and the continued work of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

Here are some of the milestones in the history of the CCBC and in the world of Canadian children’s books.

1972–75
• Irma McDonough (later Irma McDonough Milnes) in a brief to the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing, argues for the establishment of a Canadian children’s book centre. Prof. Sheila Egoff, who prepared the background paper for the commission, makes a similar recommendation. Continued discussion over the next few years results in a pilot project, developed by the Book and Periodical Development Council’s Task Force on Children’s Literature, chaired by Irma McDonough.

1976
• During the International Year of the Child, the Centre’s founders begin the six-month pilot project that establishes the Children’s Book Centre. Irma McDonough is the project director.

1977
• Phyllis Yaffe, co-founder of Emergency Librarian, is hired as Executive Director.
• First Our Choice appears (12 pages; 50 new and classic titles); first Children’s Book Festival (renamed Children’s Book Week in 1988) with poster by Frank Newfeld; 12 authors tour, each giving four readings.
• The first Children’s Literature Roundtable is established in Edmonton.

1978
• There are 12 children’s bookstores in Canada; the success of OWL magazine prompts the launching of Chickadee (now chickaDEE).

1979
• The Centre moves to 229 College Street; membership stands at 140.

1980
• 132 children’s books are published in Canada this year.
• Phyllis Yaffe leaves to become Executive Director of the Association of Canadian Publishers and is replaced by Ellen Montizambert.
• The new Our Choice features 122 new titles and 24 classics (the classics are eventually given their own publication, Too Good to Miss).

1981
• Virginia Davis becomes the new Executive Director.
• 14 authors tour during Children’s Book Festival; Our Choice has 163 titles.

1982
• Toronto’s Harbourfront Gallery hosts Images of Childhood, an exhibit of works by 17 children’s book illustrators.
• After a survey shows that of the 124 titles in the 1979 Our Choice, teachers in Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan had heard of only 35 and used only nine in the classroom, the 1982 Book Festival kit includes an activity guide for teachers on using Canadian books.

1983
• 17 authors tour for Children’s Book Festival.

1984
• Toronto’s Harbourfront Gallery hosts Images of Childhood, an exhibit of works by 17 children’s book illustrators.

1985
• 132 children’s books are published in Canada this year.

1986
• The new Our Choice features 122 new titles and 24 classics (the classics are eventually given their own publication, Too Good to Miss).

1987
• 14 authors tour during Children’s Book Festival; Our Choice has 163 titles.

1988
• Toronto’s Harbourfront Gallery hosts Images of Childhood, an exhibit of works by 17 children’s book illustrators.
1984

• Kathy Lowinger replaces Virginia Davis; the Centre hires its first regional officers: Marg Stephen (Alberta); Lynda Newson (Saskatchewan) and Jean Swift (Manitoba). Anne Connor Brimer becomes the first Atlantic regional officer in 1986.
• Annick Press is chosen Publisher of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers Association, the first children’s publisher to win this award.

1984/85

• The CCBC issues its first seven audio-visual Meet the Author kits.

1985

• The Children’s Book Festival theme is the Art of the Illustrator; although touring grants have funded only authors’ travels, extra funding is found to send 10 illustrators on tour as well as the 17 featured writers.

1986/87

• An author exchange with the UK brings four British writers to Canada in the fall (Jan Mark, John Rowe Townsend, Jill Paton Walsh and Philippa Pearce) and sends four Canadians to England in the new year (Kathy Stinson, Jean Little, Monica Hughes and Camilla Gryski).

1987

• The Centre adds “Canadian” to its name to more clearly reflect its purpose.
• There are 11 Children’s Literature Roundtables across the country.
• Science writers join this year’s Children’s Book Festival tour, for a total of 25 authors and author / illustrators. The government of Manitoba proclaims Children’s Book Festival Week throughout the province.

1988

• Barbara Reid wins the UNICEF–Ezra Jack Keats International Award for her work on The New Baby Calf and Have You Seen Birds? She is the second winner of the biennial award established in 1984. Two years later, Jan Thornhill wins the award for The Wildlife 123.

1989

• Irma McDonough Milnes donates 300 books from her collection to the Centre’s library.
• Kathy Lowinger leaves to start the children’s publishing program at Lester & Orpen Dennys; Debbie Rogosin becomes Executive Director.
• The first Roundtable Information Book Award goes to Terence Dickinson for Exploring the Night Sky.

1990

• The “Canada at Bologna” exhibit (displayed at the Bologna Book Fair) features 118 pieces of art by 43 Canadian children’s illustrators.
• Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn officially opens the CCBC’s new home at 35 Spadina Road.
• 24 authors and illustrators tour during Book Week, giving over 400 readings.

1991

• The first Manitoba Young Readers’ Choice Award goes to Gordon Korman for The Zucchini Warriors. This is the first children’s choice award in Canada, now one of many children’s choice awards across the country.
• Debbie Rogosin leaves to become picture book editor at Kids Can Press.

1992

• The first Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People goes to Carol Matas for Lisa.

1992/93

• A difficult time for the Centre; heated debate over future directions results in hiring of consultant who meets with many of the Centre’s users and supporters across the country; Our Choice and Book Week are maintained throughout this time through the hard work of the single Centre staffer Nancy Pearson, and volunteers in several parts of the country; Young Alberta Book Society takes on editorship of Canadian Children’s Book News for two and a half years.

1994

• Consultant’s report is presented to the membership at the AGM and directions for the future are approved; Charlotte Teeple is hired as Executive Director.

1995

• 125 pieces of art by Canadian picture book artists are auctioned to raise funds for the CCBC; this is the first of several art auctions held over the next 13 years (1997, 1999 and 2006 in Toronto, 2008 in Vancouver, 2009 in Ottawa and 2012 in Montreal).

1996

• Our Choice has over 200 titles, plus audios, videos, CD-ROMs, Too Good to Miss II highlights 150 classic Canadian books; 23 authors and illustrators tour during Book Week.
• Tenth annual Guadalajara Book Fair, Mexico, highlights Canadian publishing, including an exhibition of work by 47 children’s book illustrators.
• The CCBC gets a website.

1997

• National Library of Canada exhibition
“The Art of Illustration” opens, presenting the original art of 29 contemporary Canadian children’s book illustrators.

1999
- The first Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction is awarded to Deborah Pearson and Andy Turnbull for By Truck to the North: My Winter Adventure.

2000
- The CCBC moves to its current location in the Toronto Public Library’s Northern District branch.
- The first annual TD Grade One Book Giveaway, administered by the CCBC and sponsored by TD Bank Group, sees over 400,000 copies of Nicholas at the Library distributed to children all across Canada.

2001
- CCBC adds Nunavut to the Book Week tour; Robert Munsch is the first author to tour the territory.

2002
- The Imperial Oil Foundation becomes the sponsor of the new Writing Contest for children in Grades 2 to 6, held in conjunction with TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.

2003
- The Fun of Reading: International Forum on Canadian Children’s Literature brings national and international participants to Ottawa to explore Canadian children’s literature.
- Canadian Children’s Book News changes from newsletter to colour magazine; first cover features an illustration from Wallace Edwards’ Alphabeasts

2005
- The first TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award goes to Marthe Jocelyn for Mable Riley: A Reliable Record of Humdrum, Peril & Romance. The first Prix TD goes to François Barcelo and Anne Villeneuve for Le nul et la chipie.

2006
- The first Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award goes to Marie-Louise Gay for Caramba.

2008
- TD Canadian Children’s Book Week celebrates the 100th anniversary of the publication of Anne of Green Gables with the theme “Classic Canadian Reading.”
- Our Choice becomes Best Books for Kids & Teens, featuring a lively and expanded format, and is sold through the newsstands.
- A French-language tour featuring Prix TD winning and shortlisted authors and illustrators is added to TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.

2009
- The TD Grade One Book Giveaway now includes a national tour for the author and illustrator of the selected book.

2010
- CCBC discontinues positions of Regional Officers.

2011
- The first John Spray Mystery Award goes to Y.S. Lee for A Spy in the House.

2012
- The first Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy (established in 2011) goes to PJ Sarah Collins for What Happened to Serenity?
- Best Books for Kids & Teens becomes a semi-annual publication.

2014
- Amy Mathers conducts a cross-Canada reading marathon, reading one YA book and writing a review every day of the year. Beginning with books set in Newfoundland or written by Newfoundland authors and ending with BC settings and authors, she raises $20,000 towards a teen book award.
- In partnership with Historica Canada, the CCBC creates a Teachers’ Book Bank featuring titles related to Canadian history for readers in Grades 4 to 8. Eight classrooms win a visit by one of four Canadian authors.

2015
- The first Amy Mathers Teen Book Award goes to Marthe Jocelyn for What We Hide.

2016
- The CCBC celebrates its 40th year! The Book Week theme is 40 Years of Great Books! The Centre gets a new website design. A special fundraising dinner is planned for September.
Happy 40th Anniversary
to the Canadian Children’s Book Centre!

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Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

After four decades, three publishers talk about the future

BY GILLIAN O’REILLY

Quality, international esteem, a larger proportion of sales south of the border — and a world so different from the 1970s. Given the situation today, what are the challenges for Canadian children’s book publishers? Forty years after the founding of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre, we talk to three publishers whose careers have spanned those years and, in the case of two, who are still operating the companies they founded in the 1970s. In each case, the company’s list still hews closely to its original vision.

Rick Wilks and Anne Millyard never intended to start a publishing company. They established Books by Kids in 1975, in order to help young people find their literary voices and to publish their creative writing. This led, in 1976, to establishing Annick Press to publish books by adults who could truly speak to kids, specifically the stories of a daycare worker named Robert Munsch.

“For us, it was a concern about the choices available in books. The idea that it really does mean something to be Canadian and it really does mean something to be a youth in Canada,” recalls Wilks. “We still feel that. You don’t have a domestic and Indigenous cultural identity if you grow up without the books [that support it].”

Among the challenges of those days was “the Catch-22 that there was no real literature for kids so there was no body of real writers. And because there were no real writers, there was not much literature.” The same problem, he adds, affected publishers. Because publishers were creating books that weren’t seen to be viable, it was difficult to develop an industry — and a real infrastructure that could support it.

“We had to break out of that.”

Margie Wolfe began volunteering with the Women’s Press collective in 1976. Following a schism in 1988, she and three other women founded Second Story Press (she is now the sole owner), publishing books for children and adults with feminist and diverse themes, as well as Holocaust-related stories.

“Part of the challenge today is that we are actually running two companies. One we know and have been dealing with forever. The other is digital, and we are feeling our way. I don’t know anyone that feels totally confident about it.”

“The other big challenge is that we sell books in such different ways from when we started. When I started, most books were sold in Canadian bookstores — the chains [like Coles and Smith’s] and independents. The library market was small. Now we are trying to find all the potential places to reach readers because the old ways don’t work.”

James Lorimer’s firm (James Lorimer & Co.) began by publishing adult books, but added children’s books in 1974, with a series of historical novels by Bill Freeman, followed by two picture books (one by Margaret Laurence and the other by Joyce Barkhouse and Margaret Atwood).

Lorimer recalls, “Our original vision was partly influenced by This Magazine Is About Schools. [The magazine’s co-founder] George Martell was pestering me to do children’s publishing and always with the idea of appealing to kids who weren’t readers.”

Because of their strong story lines, he says, the Bill Freeman books found a surprising audience among what we would now call reluctant readers. “We didn’t have the language around ‘reluctant readers’ then, but we did have the notion that there should be books for them.” Although Lorimer now publishes for a different age group of reluctant readers, “we really did see ourselves as having that vision from the beginning.”

Today: industry maturation, international respect

Today, Wilks, Wolfe and Lorimer all point to the maturation of the industry and to the quality of books that are recognized around the world.

For Wilks, “The good news is the maturation of the industry, and that includes creators as well as publishers. It is phenomenal to see the books coming out of this country, and consistently so. As an industry, we are still largely an editorially driven sector — that helps us create good books.”

“The big change for all of us in Canada,” says Wolfe, “is that we no longer see our world as Canadian — our world is the world. In the mid-1970s, that thought never even occurred to me. I didn’t go to the Bologna Children’s Book Fair until 1982 or 1983, and I have gone every year since then.”
Canadians are now “very smart and very good” at producing books that sell well internationally, whether directly into the US market or through rights sales to companies around the world. “I see what my colleagues are doing, and it makes me proud.”

She points to the fact that the winner of the 2016 Bologna Publishers Award in the North American category is Groundwood Books and Second Story Press and Kids Can Press were shortlisted. Annick Press was nominated in 2013.

eBooks — a hassle, not a threat
In the same way that paperbacks were seen as a dangerous threat to books when they appeared in the 1930s, eBooks have been touted as a threat to print. However, eBook sales are levelling off and becoming just one more format for publishers to include in their offerings. Wilks describes eBooks as “a hassle rather than a threat. People don’t believe me but, when we cost it out, eBooks are more expensive.” He explains that, because the problem is discoverability, eBooks need substantial marketing.

Wolfe agrees that eBooks “are not the monster revenue stream everyone predicted. They aren’t lucrative, but you can’t abandon them, because there is a popular expectation about them. I love that print will continue. At the same time, we have to figure out what is useful for us, how to pay for it, and what should we [be doing] now.”

Canadian publishers? North American publishers?
Lorimer agrees with his colleagues about the international interest in Canadian books, but confesses to being frustrated by the Canadian market. Six or seven years ago, after an outside evaluation, the company set about doing everything to make its marketing more professional. “To my astonishment, the effect in the US market has been really positive... but in spite of a whole whack of things we have done, sales have remained the same in Canada.”

As with most Canadian publishers, a large portion of Lorimer’s sales are in the US market. Where it was once thought that American readers would not be interested in or accept a Canadian story or setting, Lorimer says that is no longer an issue.

There are some stories that work only for a Canadian market, and Lorimer points to the Righting Canada’s Wrongs series, which his company distributes only in Canada. (Wolfe likewise points to a forthcoming book on residential schools.) However, Lorimer has been pleasantly surprised by the US sales for his Real Justice series on wrongful convictions. The feedback received is that the issues around justice and policing are similar, and the “Canadian-ness” is not an issue.

He worries, however, that the Canadian market has lost the sense that Canadian books are important or have cultural significance. “We continue publishing Canadian authors, but we are selling in to the North American market. We are becoming North American publishers — and that’s very invidious.”

In the short term, he explains, it’s the right thing from a business point of view, but it can have a subtle effect on how a publisher sets priorities or chooses projects. (Do you take on an important project that will be a small success or another one that will be a larger success?) For Canadian kids’ books and Canadian readers and the persistence of Canadian culture, there is a danger in the North-Americanized model.

The place of reading
After 40-odd years in the business, Rick Wilks, a founder of the National Reading Campaign, has one big disappointment. “I am really discouraged that, after all these years, reading hasn’t more prominence as a profoundly significant public good. Reading can profoundly change lives.”

He points to studies showing that while reading levels haven’t dropped, the practice of reading for pleasure is decreasing. “All the studies show the real, psychological human development that comes from reading for pleasure — more empathy, better relationships, every study proves it.”

Lorimer is sanguine about one aspect of the business — because of the value of the Canadian dollar. “Everyone has sales in the US that are worth more. It’s going to take 12 to 24 months to work its way through, but inevitably Canadian books will be affected as the prices of US books rise.”

He predicts that either Canadian books will be cheaper than the equivalent American books, and thus have a competitive edge. Or publishers will have the freedom to price Canadian books higher, allowing a higher margin. “So, in that respect, prospects for children’s book publishers are very good right now.”

Gillian O’Reilly is editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.
Heading Out

Book Week first-timers talk about perseverance, otters, polar bears, world building and more

Thirty wonderful Canadian authors, illustrators and storytellers will be visiting schools, libraries, community centres and bookstores across Canada throughout TD Canadian Children’s Book Week (May 7 to 14, 2016).

Some of the participants have toured for Book Week previously and are returning to enjoy the sometimes exhausting but always exhilarating and inspiring week. Others are heading out for their first experience with the CCBC’s national tour. What are they looking forward to? We asked five authors.

Karen Autio visiting Ontario
Growing Up in Wild Horse Canyon, illustrated by Loraine Kemp (Sono Nis Press, Fall 2016)
Kah-Lan the Adventurous Sea Otter, illustrated by Sheena Lott (Sono Nis Press, 2015)
Sabotage (Sono Nis Press, 2013)
Saara’s Passage (Sono Nis Press, 2008)

I’m so looking forward to sharing my love of writing and researching with students. To me, Canada’s history is intriguing! And our marine mammals and wild horses? Totally fascinating. I want to encourage young writers to be curious. They will be surprised by what they learn through research, and the stories they write will be more authentic.

I wrote the first draft of Kah-Lan over 30 years ago! So part of my presentations will focus on being persistent with stories that refuse to let go of you, to keep editing and revising to create the best story possible. I introduced Kah-Lan to northwestern Ontario students last fall and saw their enthusiasm for sea otters; I’m delighted to again share my love for these remarkable animals with children. Most of all I hope to inspire young people to read. I love travelling, so the opportunity to explore new places and sample new delicacies is also exciting.

Lisa Dalrymple visiting British Columbia, Interior
Double Trouble at The Rooms, illustrated by Elizabeth Pratt (Tuckamore Books, 2016)
Cultural Traditions in South Korea (Crabtree Publishing, 2016)
Explore with Francisco Pizarro (Crabtree Publishing, 2015)
Explore with James Cook (Crabtree Publishing, 2015)

TD Canadian Children’s Book Week is a special program. I’ve applied to be a part of it for several years and I am beyond thrilled to have been selected to tour this year. In a country the size of Canada, the reach of Book Week is inspiring.

My 2016 book is published by Tuckamore Books, a terrific independent publisher with a strong regional following in Newfoundland, and the story is set during a class trip to The Rooms, the museum that sits on the hill in St. John’s. Book Week offers creators and publishers the opportunity to introduce their works to readers in parts of Canada they might not otherwise get to reach. Nothing excites me more than the thought that I will be taking my Newfoundland story about a little girl and her polar bear and sharing it with children at the foot of the Rockies in BC. Could there be any better illustration of how far-reaching the effects of Book Week can be — for creators, for publishers and, most of all, for young readers.
I was a first-timer, I was fangirling a bit over the official announcement. I also added a bunch of new-to-me authors and titles to my to-be-read pile.

That's the beauty of Book Week. It's a great blend of upcoming and established talents being dispersed across the country, ready, keen and thrilled to bits to be part of this opportunity. I know I sure am.

I'm especially looking forward to visiting my host province, Nova Scotia, birthplace of my father (Glace Bay) and home to relatives I have not seen for many, many years. I have a feeling this will be a wonderfully productive and nostalgic journey, from which I will return with new friends, stories brewing, and endless dreams of the sea. I simply can't wait.

Danika Dinsmore visiting Ontario

_Narine of Noe, Faerie Tales from the White Forest, Book 4_ (Hydra House, 2015)
_Nondelle of Grioth, Faerie Tales from the White Forest, Book 3_ (Hydra House, 2014)
_The Ruins of Noe, Faerie Tales from the White Forest, Book 2_ (Hydra House, 2012)

I’m thrilled to be a part of the whirlwind TD Canadian Children’s Book Week tour this year. Some people might be intimidated by the idea of getting up in front of an audience, especially a large one, but with a background in education and performing arts, I’m quite comfortable both teaching and performing. As a matter of fact, I find it invigorating. I love book touring, and I love interacting with children of all ages.

I’ve been working with writers in a variety of settings for 25 years, teaching creative writing, world building, poetry and spoken word. Twenty years ago I co-founded the Northwest SPokenword LAB (SPLAB), which hosted Washington State’s first youth poetry slam, a visiting author series and an artist-in-the-schools program. I’ve been involved in writer-in-the-school events ever since.

This spring’s tour will be a mix of “readings” and world-building workshops. Never straightforward, my readings are interactive, with call-and-response songs and spontaneous creative activities. And in my world-building workshops, each student will create a new world from scratch and populate it with imaginary creatures as a jumping-off point for endless storytelling. It’s sure to be quite the adventure for us all.

Graham Ross visiting British Columbia, Lower Mainland

_Billy Sure, Kid Entrepreneur and the Everything Locator_ (Simon & Schuster, November 2016)
_Billy Sure, Kid Entrepreneur is NOT a Singer_ (Simon & Schuster, September 2016)
_Billy Sure, Kid Entrepreneur and the Invisible Inventor_ (Simon & Schuster, July 2016)
_Billy Sure, Kid Entrepreneur and the Haywire Hovercraft_ (Simon & Schuster, May 2016)
_Billy Sure, Kid Entrepreneur is a Spy_ (Simon & Schuster, 2016)

As Forrest Gump’s mother was fond of saying, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” I think this is what I’m looking forward to most about Book Week 2016. Every child is different, and because of this every presentation will be different. At a presentation I did for Grade One students, I was asked by an earnest young boy what I ate for lunch. Out of the mouths of babes. This is going to be fun!

As an eight-year-old, I did a drawing of a vibrant red fire engine. Holding it over my head for all to see, I was rewarded with oohs and aahs. Hey! I thought, you do a drawing and you get a reaction. I could get into this. This was the catalyst for me to pursue art and illustration as a career. Perhaps, while on tour, I can spark an interest in art/illustration for one child like that fire engine was my spark.

Judith Graves visiting Nova Scotia

_Exposed, Retribution Trilogy_ (Orca Book Publishers, 2015)
_“The Tell-Tale Scarf” in Fright Before Christmas_ (Leap Books, 2015)
_Skin of My Teeth, Skinned, Book 3_ (Leap Books, 2015)

In less than a month I’ll be heading off on a grand week-long adventure with the TD Canadian Children’s Book Week tour. Book Week features a solid roster of talented authors and, as
“BOOKMARK!” HIGHLIGHTS BOOKS FOR A VARIETY OF GRADE LEVELS AROUND A PARTICULAR THEME. AS WE CELEBRATE THE CANADIAN CHILDREN’S BOOK CENTRE’S 40TH BIRTHDAY, TAKE A LOOK AT THESE CLASSICS OF CHILDREN’S LITERATURE, MANY OF WHICH STARTED LONG-RUNNING SERIES. COMPILED BY CCBC LIBRARY COORDINATOR MEGHAN HOWE.

Canadian Classics through the Decades

PICTURE BOOKS FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5

**Alligator Pie**
written by Dennis Lee
illustrated by Frank Newfeld
(HarperCollins Canada, 2012 ©1974)

*Alligator Pie* established Dennis Lee’s reputation as “Canada’s Father Goose.” This classic edition, featuring Frank Newfeld’s instantly recognizable original illustrations and design, includes childhood favourites, such as “Willoughby Wallaby Woo” and “Skyscraper.”

**Children of the Yukon**
written and illustrated by Ted Harrison
(Tundra Books, 1977)

Ted Harrison’s distinctive and vibrant paintings depict Yukon children at work and play — feeding ravens, snaring rabbits, hunting moose, racing on snowshoes, exploring Dawson City and panning for gold in famous Bonanza Creek.

**Franklin in the Dark**
written by Paulette Bourgeois
illustrated by Brenda Clark
(Kids Can Press, 1986)

In the book that started the series, Franklin has a common problem — he is afraid of the dark. This is particularly distressing because he is a turtle, and the darkness he fears is inside his own shell.

**The Hockey Sweater**
written by Roch Carrier
illustrated by Sheldon Cohen
(Tundra Books, 1984)

When Roch outgrows his cherished Canadiens sweater, his mother writes away to Monsieur Eaton for a new one. The company sends the sweater of the most despised team of all: the Toronto Maple Leafs.

**Jillian Jiggs**
written and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman
(Scholastic Canada, 1985)

In this vividly illustrated picture book with infectious rhymes, we meet Jillian Jiggs, inventor of new games and fabulous adventures and creator of a very messy room!

**The Name of the Tree**
retold by Celia Barker Lottridge
illustrated by Ian Wallace
(Groundwood Books, 1989)

Starving animals discover a miraculous tree that could feed them — if only they could learn its name. This elegant retelling of a Bantu folktale is brought to life by Ian Wallace’s extraordinary illustrations.

**The Paper Bag Princess**
written by Robert Munsch
illustrated by Michael Martchenko
(Annick Press, 1980)

 Tradition gets tweaked when an unglamorous princess outwits an arrogant dragon to rescue an equally arrogant prince in this, whimsically illustrated fractured fairy tale.

**Red Is Best**
written by Kathy Stinson
illustrated by Robin Baird Lewis
(Annick Press, 1982)

In this modern classic, a little girl explains how red mitts make better snowballs, red boots take bigger steps and red pajamas keep monsters away. Why is this so? Well naturally, red is best!

**Something From Nothing**
written and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman
(Scholastic Canada, 1992)

Retelling this traditional Jewish tale about a young boy and his grandfather, Gilman offers a richly developed and layered tale of creativity and family bonds and a loving portrait of shtetl life.

**Stella, Star of the Sea**
written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay
(Groundwood Books, 1999)

Exquisite watercolours bring a day at the beach alive in this perfect summer story. Gently humorous, it captures the relationship between a sister and her baby brother.
JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 3 TO 8

Anne of Green Gables
written by L.M. Montgomery
(Tundra Books, 2014 ©1908)
This engaging story of a lively young orphan and her life on a Prince Edward Island farm still delights its new readers. A true Canadian classic.

A Child in a Prison Camp
written and illustrated by Shizuye Takashima
(Tundra Books, 1971)
Muted watercolours depict a child’s life in a WWII prison camp for Japanese-Canadians. This exceptional work was the first book for children to cover a shameful piece of Canadian history.

Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang
written by Mordecai Richler
illustrated by Dušan Petricic
(Tundra Books, 2009 ©1975)
A small child’s worst fears come true for Jacob who has committed the serious crime of insulting a grown-up. Meet the Hooded Fang and The Child Power Rescue Team in this very funny book.

Mama’s Going to Buy You a Mockingbird
written by Jean Little
(Puffin Canada, 2013 ©1984)
Jeremy’s life changes irrevocably when he discovers that his father has cancer. But he finds an unlikely friend in Tess, who knows what it’s like to lose someone.

A Prairie Boy’s Winter
written and illustrated by William Kurelek
(Tundra Books, 1973)
Noted artist William Kurelek describes his winters growing up on a dairy farm in 1930s Manitoba. Through simple text and 20 paintings, he shares the rigours of chores like hauling hay and the pleasures of games like Fox and Geese.

Silverwing
written by Kenneth Oppel
(HarperCollins Publishers, 1997)
The thrilling story of Shade, a young silver-wing bat, who is separated from his colony during the long winter migration, and finds himself on an incredible journey.

Shine in Hawthorn Bay
written by Janet Lunn
(Seal Books, 2001 ©1986)
Mary Urquhart, a Scottish girl, has the “second sight.” One morning in 1815, she hears her cousin calling desperately from 3,000 miles away in Upper Canada. Responding to his plea, Mary finds herself fighting dark forces in a new land.

The Leaving
written by Budge Wilson
(Fitzhenry & Whiteside 2010 ©1990)
Brilliantly crafted, this short story collection explores growth and development, families and relationships, and the coming of age for a variety of women in many different situations.

The Maestro
written by Tim Wynne-Jones
(Groundwood Books, 1995)
Escaping his abusive father, 15-year-old Burl tries to survive in the woods. The sound of a piano draws him to the cabin of an eccentric genius, and a meeting that will change Burl’s life forever.

SENIOR FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP

Crabbe
written by William Bell
(Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2006 ©1986)
Crabbe has everything — successful parents, a beautiful home, good marks. But something is missing and he turns to alcohol. As he fights to escape addiction and parental domination, he discovers himself.

Hold Fast
written by Kevin Major
(Groundwood Books, 2013 ©1978)
The widely acclaimed story of a young Newfoundland boy’s struggle to survive in a new environment and stand up for himself and his way of life. Film adaptation in 2013.

The Sky Is Falling
written by Kit Pearson
(Puffin Canada, 2014 ©1989)
With a German invasion threatening Britain, Norah and Gavin are evacuated to Canada in 1940. Norah makes friends and discovers a surprising responsibility that will help her accept her new country.

Up to Low
written by Brian Doyle
(Groundwood Books, 1982)
Fifteen-year-old Tommy learns lessons about life and love on his trip to Low with his dad and his dad’s friend Frank. Doyle’s humour and passion for language shine in this award-winning book.
The Classroom Bookshelf

A MIXTURE OF FASCINATING READS

BY SANDRA O'BRIEN

Once again, we have an eclectic compilation of books for the Classroom Bookshelf, but I must say they are three fascinating reads. One tells the compelling story of a child soldier who is kidnapped at the age of five and forced to engage in activities no child should ever have to endure. Another provides important information and support to teenage boys who find themselves faced with a girlfriend’s pregnancy, assuring them they do not need to feel alone in this situation as there are many who can guide them and help them along the way. And finally, a book about politics for students interested in becoming activists or politicians, or who just want to understand how the whole process works. Hope you enjoy these books as much as I did!

Edward Keenan begins his book by asking students if they want to be politicians. He then proceeds to tell them that regardless of whether they want to be or not, they are politicians, they’re just not professional politicians. He goes on to explain that politics is how we decide to do things as a group and how we get along, and that everyday political decisions affect everyone. Keenan then discusses how politics work, the role students play in politics, how to play that role really well and, more importantly, why we need politics. Along with his excellent explanations on decision making, strong arguments and the good and bad of conflict, Keenan has included definitions and informative sidebars to further explain how and why students should become active participants in the political process.

Keenan, an eight-time National Magazine Award finalist, does an excellent job of introducing the topic of political science to students in the junior and intermediate grades and, by discussing the actions of Malala Yousafzai, Mary-Pat Hector, Zhan Haite and Kelvin Doe, shows students they can become political activists long before they are even old enough to vote. Keenan has managed to pack a lot of comprehensive information into a 60-page book, and Julie McLaughlin’s illustrations add interest and a touch of humour. Teachers involved with student governments or wishing to discuss politics with their students will find this book an excellent and indispensable resource.

My Girlfriend’s Pregnant! A Teen’s Guide to Becoming a Dad
written by Chloe Shantz-Hilkes
Annick Press, 2015
978-1-55451-743-5 (hc) $19.95
978-1-55451-742-8 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 9 to 12

Most literature written about teen pregnancies focuses on the mom, and the dad’s role is usually relegated to the background. This book does just the opposite and was written to acknowledge the fact that teen fathers need information and support, too. The book has been based on extensive interviews with teenage fathers, social workers and medical professionals, and deals with a wide range of topics ranging from what it’s like to discover your partner is pregnant, how to deal with parents, how involved a teen dad can be, how parenthood can affect young relationships and how fatherhood can affect your education. The book also discusses the options of abortion, adoption and parenthood and explains what happens during pregnancy and childbirth. Most importantly, young dads will learn that they are not alone, they always have options and they don’t need to accept the assumptions or judgments of others. The text of this book has been liberally interspersed with first-person testimonials, which makes it a quick, engaging read for teenage fathers-to-be. True/false questions are also spread throughout the text with answers found at the end, giving teens more information about the myths that surround sex and pregnancy. A reading list and resources are also included so that fathers have multiple ways to access more information on topics such as child support and bonding with your child. (This book could be paired with Annick Press’s earlier book for teen girls, Dear Diary, I’m Pregnant: Ten Real Life Stories by Anrenée Englander.)

Chloe Shantz-Hilkes has written a comprehensive and important resource for young fathers-to-be. It should be on the shelves of high schools everywhere!
**Child Soldier: When Boys and Girls Are Used in War** *(CitizenKid)*

written by Jessica Dee Humphreys and Michel Chikwanine
illustrated by Claudia Dávila
Kids Can Press, 2015
978-1-77138-126-0 (hc) $18.95
978-1-77138-628-9 (eBook) $18.95
for Grades 5 to 8

Non-fiction | Child Soldiers | Congo (Democratic Republic) | Children and War | Graphic Novel

After a hundred years of Belgian rule, the people of the Congo had had enough and, in 1960, achieved independence. Unfortunately, no one knew how to go back to the old ways, and the Congolese men who were brought into power were interested in making things better for themselves, not for the Congolese people. In 1993, when five-year-old Michel Chikwanine’s story begins, the Democratic Republic of Congo was going through a major political change, and things were about to get a lot worse.

While playing one day, Michel and his friends were taken by a group of rebel soldiers and thrust into a terrifying world of drugs, abuse and killing. Michel and his friends were forced to carry heavy packs and weapons, to run, to fight and to kill. The boys were warned if they tried to run away they would be killed and if they tried to return home their families would hate them. Michel, who was scared but knew his family would always love him, miraculously escaped his captors and found his way home. He was lovingly welcomed back, but nothing would ever be the same!

In this compelling story, Chikwanine recounts his time with the rebel militia, his escape and his efforts to make a new life for himself and his family in Canada. This book will introduce young readers to the plight of many child soldiers worldwide and inspire them to take action to protect all children from harm. At the back of the book, students can learn more about Michel, his efforts to share his message and what we can do to stop boys and girls from being used in war. Both authors and illustrator Claudia Dávila have created a powerful graphic novel that should be on the shelves of junior and intermediate classrooms and libraries across Canada.

Sandra O’Brien is a former teacher with an M.Ed. in Children’s Literature.
Who wouldn’t welcome the opportunity to travel back in time to meet celebrated artists whose work altered the way one regards art? Through these beautifully illustrated picture books, one can do just that! Here we are introduced to three individuals — two painters and one dancer — who inspired millions with their sheer brilliance and daring vision. Yet this did not come by chance. Young readers will learn about the artists’ unrelenting commitment, personal sacrifice, tremendous courage, and even their sense of isolation as they created their transcendent works.

“In the beautiful countryside in southern France near the town of Arles long ago, I used to do an ugly thing. I tormented someone. I was mean to him.” So writes an elderly man in his diary while recalling his youth when he and many others of all ages in his village harassed an artist for being unconventional. This particular painter’s appearance and behaviour seemed eccentric. He was also poor because no one ever purchased his art. The young boy found frequent opportunities to ridicule him, especially in public.

“There were many reasons to laugh. He painted awful pictures. They had bright hues that didn’t match — colors weren’t supposed to go like that. They pictured people who didn’t look the way they ought to look — and funny flowers and shining streets and strange starry skies. It wasn’t right.” However, there were instances when the young lad had misgivings about his cruel behaviour, especially after secretly examining the artwork, only to realize that there was more than one way to see the world. Foolishly, he refused the artist’s kind gift of one of his paintings, only to come across that very same work hanging in a famous Paris museum many years later when he visited there as an old man. The artist was Vincent van Gogh, the painting a masterpiece worth millions. “I don’t laugh at him anymore.”

Inspired by van Gogh’s experiences in Arles, France, in 1888, author Shane Peacock has written a fictionalized account of events from the viewpoint of a young bully whose animosity was galvanized by the adults around him. “We called him horrible names. We threw things at him. It made us almost giddy.” The story is as much about the famous painter as the young boy who realized, too late, how wrong he was to act in such a hurtful and destructive way. A brief biography of the painter and an Author’s Note about bullying are included where Peacock states, “He [van Gogh] stands as a symbol of someone who lived a life that wasn’t about making money or being famous, but by doing what he believed in, no matter what.”
The gifted and versatile Sydney Smith succeeds brilliantly with biographical information about the artist is also included. When Grant was happy, Tillie was happy. “A helpful Author’s Note people he knew best. When he was finished, he was happy. And painting. He wanted to show the world the place he loved and the in a masterpiece: “Grant took all the time he needed to make the fiction, Kulling relays how ordinary, everyday routines can result originated while milking cows, Kulling introduces a bovine named land one loves. Because Wood once stated that all his good ideas
in poverty as the daughter of a laundrywoman. Her life changed during her mother took her to the ballet: “A story unfold. A sleeping beauty opens her eyes / ...and so does Anna. / Her feet wake up! / Her skin prickles. / There is a song, suddenly, working at the barre, or spinning chaînés turns across the floor. All of us laboring in the smells of sweat and crushed rosin; all of us reaching for beauty. And indebted to Anna, who led the way.”
Van Gogh, Wood and Pavlova are three artists whose moving life stories and iconic work resonate and live on for all time. Sincere thanks must go to the authors, illustrators and their publishers for providing children with the opportunity to be inspired by these legendary individuals through such fine publications.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
We Recommend
NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

Malaika’s Costume
written by Nadia L. Hohn
illustrated by Irene Luxbacher
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-754-2 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-755-9 (eBook) $16.95
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Caribbean | Community | Family | Creativity and Resourcefulness

Carnival time is just around the corner, and Malaika can’t wait to wear the peacock costume of her dreams with shimmering brown, green, turquoise and gold feathers. Mummy is working in Canada and promises to send money to buy her daughter’s costume, but when it doesn’t arrive, Malaika begins to worry. Her chances of being the beautiful peacock of her dreams are in jeopardy. What’s worse is that, with no costume, Malaika might miss out on a very important cultural event of the year.

First-time picture book author Nadia L. Hohn creates a quick-thinking, resourceful character whom youngsters will admire for her strength and determination. Readers will gravitate toward Malaika’s ability to confront obstacles set before her. Hohn employs a unique style of voice that is both figuratively and literally lyrical. The natural musicality and ‘sing-song’ quality of the language will fully engage the reader.

Governor General’s Literary Award nominee Irene Luxbacher illustrates the story with digital collage, creating a rich tapestry of playful drawings and paintings (some with underlying photographic elements). With detailed doodles across the margin, Luxbacher stretches the imagination further and enriches the narrative: we experience character movement and rhythmic sound via these enhanced gesture drawings.

Multiple readings uncover the depths of Malaika’s journey. As she struggles with her dilemma, the pivotal moment comes when she is literally and figuratively at the end of the road.

Malaika’s Costume would be an excellent resource for the classroom since it allows students to see the diversity of both Canadian and world cultures while reinforcing a positive message about problem solving, both in the classroom and in everyday life — Solutions are always near.

Angela Walcott is a freelance writer and editor living in Toronto.

West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet
written by Deborah Hodge
illustrated by Karen Reczuch
Groundwood Books, 2015
978-1-55498-440-4 (hc) $19.95
978-1-55498-441-1 (eBook) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Natural World | Ecosystems | Pacific West Coast | Alphabet | Abecedarium | Wildlife | Nature

Vancouver author Deborah Hodge’s website states that she hopes her books will “help kids make new and amazing discoveries,” and her latest work, West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet, begins with a delightful invitation to explore. Readers’ curiosities will indeed be engaged as through this book they discover the interconnectedness of living creatures of the Pacific waters, sands, skies and rainforests.

The letters X, Y and Z are the keys to an alphabet book because they are challenging to do well. In West Coast Wild, these letters reveal both old and new beach treasures: xiphister is a prickleback fish that breathes air, yellow is “the color of the sun” and ‘z’ is for...
“zone, the intertidal zone, where land and sea meet.” In two-to-three sentences per letter, Hodge poetically describes creatures such as the velella velella: “like little blue sailboats, they float on the water and catch the wind with their sails.” The back of the book contains an explanatory note and ideas for further research, but it might have been nice to also have a map to situate the area.

Talented illustrator Karen Reczuch has previously created beautiful watercolour environments for books such as Salmon Creek. She does the same in West Coast Wild, painting kelp washed up on the beach in a lace of sea froth and making use of depth, detail, texture and contrasting colours with enchanting results.

If you and your young readers can’t scramble over the slippery Salish rocks yourselves, West Coast Wild will bring the ebb and flow of the Pacific to you.

Whitehorse-based author lian goodall is currently working on a book about girls born in the North before 1900.

The White Cat and the Monk: A Retelling of the Poem “Pangur Bán”
written by Jo Ellen Bogart
illustrated by Sydney Smith
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-780-1 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-781-8 (eBook) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Animals | Cats | Historical Europe | Quests

“I, monk and scholar, share my room with my white cat, Pangur. By candle’s light, late into the night, we work, each at a special trade.”

So begins a contemplative tale about an elderly monk searching for enlightenment through the study of his treasured books, while his feline companion stares intently at a hole in the wall of their spartan room, waiting patiently for a mouse to appear. Both monk and cat respect each other’s need for concentration as they perform their tasks. “Pangur does not disturb me at my work, and I do not disturb him at his.” As night turns to dawn, both experience joy when Pangur captures his prey and the monk discovers a resolution to his puzzle. “In our tiny home, Pangur finds his mouse... and I find light in the darkness.”

This retelling of a ninth-century poem composed by an anonymous Irish Benedictine monk, alludes to the similarities between himself and his companion, a white cat named Pangur Bán. Author Jo Ellen Bogart has provided an unembellished, thoughtful text that pays tribute to the value of perseverance and dedication for one’s vocation, be it humble or exalted. Of particular interest is the calligraphy-like script used for the text. An Author’s Note provides historical information about the original poem, which can be found in an Austrian monastery.

Sydney Smith’s watercolour and ink illustrations beckon readers inside the walls of a sequestered cloister where the companions spend their days and nights in quietness. Muted browns and greys, reflecting an austere way of life, are interrupted by flashes of colour emanating from the monk’s elaborately detailed manuscripts. Through Smith’s art, one observes the firm bond existing between monk and cat, and this in the midst of a simple yet caring silence that permeates their worlds.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.

Once Upon a Line
written and illustrated by Wallace Edwards
Pajama Press, 2015
978-1-927485-78-1 (hc) $19.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Imagination | Storytelling | Creativity | Writing | Puzzles

Wallace Edwards has done it again! The introduction to Once Upon a Line lets us know that the fantastical paintings in this book were created by Great-Uncle George using an enchanted pen from the East. He only had to draw a single curving line, and it would turn into a painting. Each page has an illustration incorporating that line and a start to a story, beginning with ‘Once upon a line,’ an obvious and intriguing reference to ‘Once upon a time.’ As with his other books, Edwards creates many levels of meaning by combining all that you see on the page in unexpected ways.

This is a great book for anyone with a wild imagination. On each page, Wallace draws the reader into both the illustration and the words. Readers are challenged to find the “magic line” in each picture. In most cases, the story is different, not always exactly what is shown in the picture. For example, we get a dandy rat who loves his “brand new ultra-modern house,” a gleaming white toilet sitting among flowers. The words continue, “I have never had such a beautiful home before,’ he said. Just then, a little bird said…” This sentence could lead anywhere, and is an invitation to go somewhere new each time you read it.

Although each page has its own theme, there are a few where connections are made to the previous illustration. At the back of the book is a guide showing where the magical line is in each of the pictures, and a reminder that the enchanted pen is also in each one, too.

Once Upon a Line has all the marks of a Wallace Edwards gem: his distinctive style of illustration, humour, appealing characters and just enough information to get you started on your own story.

Willow Moonbeam is a librarian living in Toronto.

A Change of Heart
written by Alice Walsh
illustrated by Erin Bennett Banks
978-1-77108-371-3 (hc) $19.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 4


Eighteen-year-old Lanier Phillips signed aboard the USS Truxton during World War II in order to escape the racism that pervaded his childhood in Georgia. But life on board the Truxton didn’t seem all that different. African-American sailors were treated like second-class citizens at best, and the teenager was left feeling angry and demoralized. But when the Truxton was shipwrecked in February 1942, his life was totally changed. Rescued by the men and women of St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, Phillips was, for the first time ever, treated not as an object of scorn or derision but as a
man and, as Walsh tells readers, “worthy as a human being.” In the aftermath of the disaster, Phillips became the first African American to graduate from the US Navy’s Sonar School and was propelled into the Civil Rights Movement where he joined Dr. Martin Luther King on the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Walsh tells Phillips’s poignant story with grace and dignity, never shying away from the deep-seated racism that insidiously shaped his life prior to the shipwreck or his anger and frustration. At the same time, she never lets us forget the power of the actions of the people of St. Lawrence who transformed his life by the way they treated him. She makes us feel his fear when he’s rescued — will he be ostracized or even dumped back into the ocean? Have the people of St. Lawrence ever even seen someone with skin his colour? And the moment when Phillips is taken in by Violet and her family is exquisite in its quiet understatement and will no doubt affect readers powerfully. The illustrations deepen the emotional richness of Walsh’s text — conveying not only the terror of the wreck but also the compassion of the residents of St. Lawrence.

As the Author Notes tell us, Lanier Phillips never forgot the people of St. Lawrence, Newfoundland. It was “[a] lesson in humanity and love for mankind.” “I was wounded in mind and soul... But I was healed in St. Lawrence, Newfoundland.” This is a story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, a fascinating moment in Newfoundland’s history and a great story that as Canadians we can all be proud of.

Jeffrey Canton is a lecturer in the Children’s Studies Program at York University.

Today Is the Day
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes
Tundra Books, 2015
978-1-77049-648-4 (hc) $19.99
for Grades 1 to 4

Today Mutanu and all the children at the orphanage will celebrate a unique birthday: children who don’t know their birth dates will all be given the gift of a birth date (and, as explained in the afterward, a birth certificate and citizenship rights). As the children finish their chores, guests arrive, and Mutanu is delighted to find her grandmother. Finally, it is time. Each child receives a birthday hat and a bag brimming with gifts. Then the moment Mutanu has been anticipating arrives — everyone sings the birthday song. No one sings louder than Mutanu because “today, for the very first time, she knew her coming into the world was not forgotten but was a cause for joyous celebration.”

Most of us take our birthdays for granted. But, like Mutanu, many Kenyan children live in fragile family situations with scarce resources, and some don’t even know their birth dates. This is the third picture book Eric Walters has set in the Kenyan orphanage run by The Creation of Hope (www.creationofhope.com). The first two books, My Name Is Blessing and Hope Springs, are also true stories based on the experiences and struggles of real Kenyan children.

The author’s story of Mutanu’s special birthday is buoyant, never maudlin, and the lively, bright illustrations by Eugenie Fernandes enrich the text, vividly conveying Mutanu’s joy. Walters never panders to his young audience, nor underestimates their ability to recognize the social and global inequalities Mutanu and other orphans face. The story, however, does not dwell on hardships but focuses on the optimism of the children and the power of hope.

This inspiring picture book, which includes an informative photographic afterward, brings Mutanu right into our homes and hearts. Teachable moments about family, community and global citizenship abound. A must-have for home, library and classroom bookshelves.

Tracey Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher in Ajax, Ontario.

A Year of Borrowed Men
written by Michelle Barker
illustrated by Renné Benoit
Pajama Press, 2015
978-1-927485-83-5 (hc) $21.95
for Grades 2 to 3

Because German men were conscripted to fight during World War II, the families left behind were obligated by the Nazi government to take in French prisoners of war to perform needed work. This is why three captives came to stay with seven-year-old Gerda, her mother and siblings at their farm. The rules were stringent: the French were to assist with the operation of the farm, sleep in outbuildings and be treated as enemies. Anyone showing kindness to these “borrowed men” could be imprisoned. It was, however, challenging for Gerda to be so hard-hearted. On one particularly cold day, she invited them to share dinner with her family inside their warm home. For this act, her mother received a stern reprimand from the local police. From then on, compassion was demonstrated in more subtle ways, ensuring that the captives were well fed and treated with dignity. When the war ended, they parted as friends.

Based on her mother’s childhood memories of Germany during World War II, Michelle Barker’s book is a poignant account of one family’s brave acts of kindness in an atmosphere thick with fear and distrust. The story is told from little Gerda’s perspective, and we witness how a prohibited relationship grew from Feinde (enemies) into Freunde (friends). “The borrowed men knew some German words but we did not speak French. We had to use our hands to show them what we meant. Sometimes I drew pictures for them.” An Author’s Note and family photographs provide further context regarding Gerda’s experiences.

Renné Benoit’s watercolour, coloured pencil and pastel illustrations convey a pastoral environment imbued with the bleakness of war. In the midst of strife and danger, we see comforting moments in one family’s life. The simple acts of preparing meals, gathering around a candle-lit Christmas tree to sing carols and sharing conversation and scarce resources with strangers offer hope that kindness can sometimes triumph over evil.

Senta Ross
“This quiet, historical gem will charm children and adults alike.”
— Kirkus, starred review

“A sophisticated and subtle story about the pursuit of joy.” — Publishers Weekly, starred review

“A stunningly illustrated meditative ode to the simple joys of human-animal companionship.”
— School Library Journal, starred review

“A beautiful piece of bookmaking.”
— Booklist, starred review

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The Canadian Children’s Book Centre
The Magical Animal Adoption Agency series is a lighthearted jaunt into an enchanted world filled with the lingering scent of cinnamon toast. The innocently ethereal illustrations of Alexandra Boiger enhance the reading pleasure. Though frothy by nature, there is enough substance and originality in this series to leave the young fantasy reader satisfied.

In Clover’s Luck, Clover feels woebegone and chronically unlucky facing summer without her best friend, Emma, and her newly escaped parakeet. Chasing the bird, she stumbles upon a magical wood and discovers a Magical Animal Adoption Agency where she decides to volunteer with the mysterious Mr. Jams. When he leaves unexpectedly, she faces new challenges and increasing responsibility at the agency, and meets magical creatures and beings both good and bad. She also discovers a few unexpected qualities of her own along the way. As she uses good sense and determination to muddle successfully through one magical mishap after another, her confidence grows. Ultimately, Clover decides that maybe it is not enough substance and originality in this series to leave the young fantasy reader satisfied.

In The Enchanted Egg, Mr. Jams returns from his trip with a magical egg. He sets off again to research its origins, leaving Clover to deal with her magical charges, and protect the egg until it hatches. Alone once again, Clover unwittingly loses the egg’s mysterious occupant when it hatches ahead of schedule. Clover must solve the mystery of the empty eggshell and other bizarre happenings around the agency, and find the best possible homes for her magical charges, all before Mr. Jams returns.

Clover is an independent, plucky little girl who gets herself into and out of magical messes with no magic other than her strength of character, good sense and occasional help from her friends. The magical beings and characters she encounters in various unexpected situations are just idiosyncratic enough to avoid most cloyingly sweet stereotypes. For example, who knew unicorn snot glittered? Fantasy lovers, and especially the pony / unicorn set, will enjoy this series. Reading it aloud to tiny fans of magical creatures would also be a pleasure.

Robin Sales is a Montreal librarian.
fields [that] run yellow and green away forever” can follow a description of cow poo. Refreshingly for a book with a young male narrator, Joe’s love for his friend is unabashedly declared: “I loved the way the juice bubbled up on your teeth.”

Thisdale’s haunting and evocative artwork captures the paradise and isolation of Joe’s memories and the present, with its shimmering washes of colour mixed with silhouettes and photorealism. Symbolism is one way that his illustrations add layers to the text. For example, the placement of the bicycle lock over Joe’s heart, the recurring white jay bird and the inclusion of hidden numbers and initials.

Educators will need to be instrumental in helping this important picture book reach its middle grade male audience.

Ailiki Tryphonopoulos is a former children’s librarian who also had a cool name for her childhood bike.

Seven Dead Pirates
written by Linda Bailey
Tundra Books, 2015
978-1-77049-815-0 (hc) $19.99
978-1-77049-817-4 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 4 to 6
Fiction | Pirates | Shyness | Making Friends

Prompted by his great-grandfather’s mysterious last words, Lewis is on the lookout for Libertalia, a haven for pirates rumoured to be located in Madagascar. When the will forces Lewis and his parents to move into Shornoway, his great-grandfather’s mansion, in order to inherit his money, he discovers Libertalia is also the name of a room in the mansion’s tower. Harbouring seven spirited pirate ghosts looking to reunite with their ship, this Libertalia is more than Lewis anticipated. Thrilled by Lewis’s arrival, however, the pirates are confident he is the man to help them conquer the modern world and return to their ship. Now Lewis himself just needs convincing.

Lewis’s elderly, over-protective parents seem to destroy his chances of making friends on a yearly basis when they show up to talk to his teacher. Having grown used to being on his own, Lewis maintains his shyness and talks minimally at school to avoid embarrassment as much as possible. The catalyst for his change comes in two forms: the first is suddenly having seven notorious pirates for roommates, and the second is the arrival in town of a new girl named Abbie who sees past his shy exterior to develop a friendship with Lewis.

The result is a swashbuckling adventure with wonderfully touching aspects such as the pirates’ love for other cutthroat tales and Lewis’s discovery of his own pirate blood deep down inside. With energetic, surprising characters and plenty of action, Seven Dead Pirates is an excellent choice for a read-aloud book.

Amy Mathers is a columnist for the CCBC’s e-newsletter for teachers and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign.
In the third instalment in the Cherry Blossom series, Michiko Minigawa is uprooted once again, having previously been forced to move from her Vancouver home to an internment camp in the BC interior after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although the war is still ongoing, her father gets a job on a farm in Ontario, and she and her family make the move across the country.

While the war assumes more of a background setting, this book is a whole new adventure for Michiko, so readers don’t need to have read the previous novels to enjoy this one. Characters in When the Cherry Blossoms Fell and Cherry Blossom Winter are replaced with a new set of characters, from the Italian couple next door, to the rich girl who makes Michiko’s life miserable, to a colourful cast of classmates and townspeople.

Maruno explores themes of cultural struggles, intergenerational conflicts and immigration issues with a deeper level of sophistication than in her previous books. She illustrates the complexity of the intersecting issues of racism and sexism in a way a 10-to-12-year-old audience can identify with. Michiko, the only Asian student in her school, is targeted by one of the “popular” girls in her class. When she is accepted by accident on the junior league baseball team, she must prove that girls can play baseball just as well as, or even better than, boys. When news gets around that she is playing baseball, Mrs. Takahashi says to her mother that Michiko should learn to speak Japanese and should not be riding bicycles and playing baseball.

Throughout the novel, Michiko matures as she negotiates through a myriad of identities and situations where she has to prove herself. She also becomes aware of her growing feelings toward an older boy, who she has never met her father and two of her siblings, she is quick to insist to all that she is not an orphan.

The story travels back and forth from the Kingston area to Butlersburg (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) as Hope journeys, once by ship and once on foot, to find her father. During her search, she re-encounters Charlotte Hooper Schuyler of The Way Lies North (the first of the series) and Freedom Bound, and Hope’s war-damaged brother, Elijah, who deserted the British forces in Freedom Bound. Her brother Moses, the protagonist of Broken Trail and The White Oneida, is mentioned but does not appear.

The real strength of Baxter’s books is her ability to weave her research seamlessly and effortlessly into such engaging stories. Every step and adventure in Hope’s tale will bring to life the times, the events and the geography of Hope’s world and that of her brother and friend. Readers encounter families torn apart by war, the hardships faced by refugees who once lived comfortably but are now scratching out a living in a new country, the arduous travel

### Cherry Blossom Baseball

(A Cherry Blossom Book, Book 3)

written by Jennifer Maruno

Dundurn, 2015

978-1-4597-3166-0 (pb) $11.99
978-1-4597-3168-4 (eBook) $8.99

for Grades 4 to 8

Fiction | Baseball | Racism | Historical Fiction | Japanese Canadians | World War II | Intergenerational Conflict | Bullying

In the third instalment in the Cherry Blossom series, Michiko Minigawa is uprooted once again, having previously been forced to move from her Vancouver home to an internment camp in the BC interior after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although the war is still ongoing, her father gets a job on a farm in Ontario, and she and her family make the move across the country.

While the war assumes more of a background setting, this book is a whole new adventure for Michiko, so readers don’t need to have read the previous novels to enjoy this one. Characters in When the Cherry Blossoms Fell and Cherry Blossom Winter are replaced with a new set of characters, from the Italian couple next door, to the rich girl who makes Michiko’s life miserable, to a colourful cast of classmates and townspeople.

Maruno explores themes of cultural struggles, intergenerational conflicts and immigration issues with a deeper level of sophistication than in her previous books. She illustrates the complexity of the intersecting issues of racism and sexism in a way a 10-to-12-year-old audience can identify with. Michiko, the only Asian student in her school, is targeted by one of the “popular” girls in her class. When she is accepted by accident on the junior league baseball team, she must prove that girls can play baseball just as well as, or even better than, boys. When news gets around that she is playing baseball, Mrs. Takahashi says to her mother that Michiko should learn to speak Japanese and should not be riding bicycles and playing baseball.

Throughout the novel, Michiko matures as she negotiates through a myriad of identities and situations where she has to prove herself. She also becomes aware of her growing feelings toward an older boy, who she has never met her father and two of her siblings, she is quick to insist to all that she is not an orphan.

The story travels back and forth from the Kingston area to Butlersburg (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) as Hope journeys, once by ship and once on foot, to find her father. During her search, she re-encounters Charlotte Hooper Schuyler of The Way Lies North (the first of the series) and Freedom Bound, and Hope’s war-damaged brother, Elijah, who deserted the British forces in Freedom Bound. Her brother Moses, the protagonist of Broken Trail and The White Oneida, is mentioned but does not appear.

The real strength of Baxter’s books is her ability to weave her research seamlessly and effortlessly into such engaging stories. Every step and adventure in Hope’s tale will bring to life the times, the events and the geography of Hope’s world and that of her brother and friend. Readers encounter families torn apart by war, the hardships faced by refugees who once lived comfortably but are now scratching out a living in a new country, the arduous travel

### The Blackthorn Key

(Blackthorn Key, Book 1)

written by Kevin Sands

Aladdin, 2015

978-1-4814-4651-8 (hc) $21.99
978-1-4814-4653-2 (eBook) $11.99

for Grades 5 to 9

Fiction | Historical Fiction | Curiosity | Mystery | Adventure | Humour | Friendship | Alchemy

Fourteen-year-old Christopher Rowe is happy as an apothecary’s apprentice in 1665. He enjoys learning how to solve complex codes and puzzles, and creating powerful medicines, potions and weapons. When a mysterious cult starts murdering London’s apothecaries, he fears his master Blackthorn might be next. With time rapidly running out, Christopher must use every skill he’s learned to discover the key to a terrible secret that could tear the world apart.

In his debut novel, author Kevin Sands has crafted a masterful historical mystery that neither kids nor adults will want to put down.

Christopher is an eager apprentice. Grateful to Blackthorn for rescuing him from the orphanage, he works hard to master his craft, but like most kids, he also has a reckless side and is constantly pulling pranks with his loyal best friend, Tom. Christopher is clever and capable, and despite his own doubts about his ability, ends up thrust into a mystery that he was unknowingly being trained to solve.

Kids love puzzles, and Sands successfully integrates chemistry-based codes and puzzles for readers to solve alongside Christopher. Filled with a number of unexpected twists that will keep readers guessing, the book is perfectly paced to hold the attention of even the most reluctant readers. Sands also does an excellent job of keeping the book modern and exciting, despite its long-ago setting.

A sequel is coming out in September, and kids will be eagerly anticipating more adventures with Christopher and Tom.

Rachel Seigel is Sales and Selection Strategist at EduCan Media.
required even to make inquiries and send letters — not to mention the longer voyages on foot or by boat to reunite — and in the terrible mental toll that war takes on soldiers in any era.

At the end of the book, Hope still has to find Moses/Broken Trail — a welcome hint that Baxter has a sixth book in mind — and, as Hope says, with a name like hers, anything is possible.

Gillian O’Reilly is the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.

Young Man With Camera
written by Emil Sher
photography by David Wyman
978-0-545-54131-2 (hc) $21.99
978-0-545-54133-6 (eBook) $21.99
for Grades 6 to 10
Fiction | Bullying | Photography | Violence |
Friendship | Suffering | Choices | Secrets

T— is used to getting hassled from all sides. From his mother, who is always worrying, from Mr. Lam, the owner of the corner store who suspects all kids of stealing, and from the trio of bullies he calls “Joined at the Hip.” Facial scarred from a fire when he was younger, T— escapes into photography, using his camera to capture the unique way he sees the world. When T— captures a brutal assault by the bullies on camera, he knows he should tell the truth, but what if telling the truth isn’t always the answer?

In this original book, told partially in photographs, author Emil Sher examines the power of a photograph to tell a story, and how much of the story the picture actually reveals. T— escape into photography, partly to deflect attention away from his scarred face, but also because he recognizes that what you see doesn’t tell the whole truth, just as T— is more than his scars. This lesson is particularly evident in the friendship he develops with a homeless woman named Lucy. To many, Lucy is just an invisible street person, but as T— gets to know her, he tries to use his camera to reveal more of her true self.

The same lesson is also true of Ryan and his sidekicks. Ryan is the kind of bully that many readers will recognize. He’s charming, popular and manipulative, and all the more dangerous because he never gets caught. T— knows the truth, but, as Sher also demonstrates, sometimes telling the truth, even when you have proof on camera, can cause further harm.

There is often a belief that books written for young people should contain a happy ending where justice and fairness prevail. Sher doesn’t shy away from offering readers a darker reality. Truth doesn’t triumph, and justice isn’t served. The novel goes end on a hopeful note, though, reminding readers once again of the capacity of art to empower and uplift.

Rachel Seigel
**Saving Montgomery Sole**
written by Mariko Tamaki
Razorbill Canada, 2016
978-0-670-07001-5 (hc) $22.99
978-0-14-3-19650-1 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 to 10
Fiction | Social Situations | Peer Pressure | Bullying | Alternative Families | LGBTQ

Growing up in the small town of Aunty, California, hasn’t been easy for Monty who has always seen herself as different from the other kids, a lone wolf. Fortunately, she has a loving home with her two moms and her younger sister, Tesla, and she can always count on her two best friends, Thomas and Naoki. Together, the three friends form the Mystery Club, dedicated to exploring the unknown or any curious or unexplained subjects that its members find intriguing. Like telekinesis. Or remote viewing. Or “the great mystery of why Capricorns are really good boyfriends and Aries are not” (Thomas’s idea).

Monty spends countless hours online, seeking out anything weird and wonderful that might be a potentially worthy Mystery Club topic. Which is how she finds “the Eye of Know” — a crystal amulet that purportedly is a “portal to vision untold.” When the pendant arrives and strange accidents start to occur, Monty wonders if there could really be some hidden powers in this stone. And if so, could it be just the thing to help her to stand up to the Reverend White and his quest to “save the American family”?

This thoughtful, leisurely coming-of-age story is a character-driven exploration of being an outsider, of making assumptions and of learning to open oneself up to the possibilities of the known world as well as the unknown. Having watched Thomas be hurt by gay-bashing peers and having suffered ridicule herself because of her lesbian moms, Monty has adopted a defensive approach to life that just barely conceals her vulnerability. Tamaki deftly depicts her insecurity and the ways in which fears blind her to her own pre-judgments about a classmate, based on who his father is. Monty’s gradual journey toward acceptance and self-discovery, with the help of the people who love her, makes for a heartwarming read.

Lisa Doucet is co-manager of Woozles, the Halifax bookstore.

**Are You Seeing Me?**
written by Darren Groth
Orca Book Publishers, 2015
978-1-4598-1081-5 (eBook) $19.95
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Autism Spectrum Disorder | Family
Relationships | Divorce | Care-Giving | Earthquake | Grief and Loss | Road Trips | Coming of Age

Nineteen-year old twins Justine and Perry are leaving on a jet plane for what should be the adventure of a lifetime. A year after their father’s death, they’re off to explore the Pacific Northwest, a last chance to bond before Perry moves into an assisted living facility, where he can be independent of his twin. Perry will get to explore some of his passions: travel to Lake Okanagan (where he hopes to see the elusive Ogopogo), visit the grave of martial arts great Bruce Lee and take measurements of seismic activity on both sides of the border. For Justine, it’s more emotionally complicated. She sees it as chance to move from being Perry’s primary caregiver to resuming her place as his sister. She’s also hoping to re-introduce their mother, who lives in Vancouver, back into the family that she abandoned when the twins were very young. But the best-laid plans go awry, and the twins discover unexpected things about one another and their abilities to cope.

Groth deftly explores the complicated lives of the twins, emotional swings and all, in this poignant novel that beautifully evokes the depth of the siblings’ loving relationship and also offers real insight into the complexity of Perry’s world as a person on the autism spectrum. He achieves this by shifting the narrative back and forth between Justine and Perry as well as including entries from a journal their father kept, allowing readers to see what’s happening from multiple points of view. But what resonates most powerfully is the emotional honesty of his story — nothing is ever just black and white. Groth’s ability to make those grey
areas visible both challenges the reader and, ultimately, provides the greatest satisfaction. In the hands of a less able writer, Are You Seeing Me? could easily have been a YA problem novel weighed down by too many issues, but instead it’s a novel about two people we care about deeply.

Jeffrey Canton

Strange Light Afar: Tales of the Supernatural from Old Japan
written by Rui Umezawa
illustrated by Mikiko Fujita
Groundwood Books, 2015
978-1-55498-723-8 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-724-5 (eBook) $16.95
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Short Stories | Folklore | Japanese Culture

If you like fairy stories and folktales, Strange Light Afar is a book for you. If you’re interested in traditional Japanese culture and folklore with some ghosts, demons and other supernatural elements thrown into the mix, the book is definitely for you.

Rui Umezawa has put his own spin on eight traditional folktales that explore various themes in the Japanese psyche — honour, envy, vanity, betrayal, nobility — as well as characters in Japanese folk culture — samurai, trickster, fisherman, heavenly maiden, demon, monk, shape-shifter, brothers.

As Umezawa writes in the Afterword, he found traditional folktales to be too didactic, the characters one-dimensional with no apparent reason for behaving the way they do. His intent in rewriting these traditional stories was to give the characters motivation and to make them fully rounded. He does succeed in showing motivation in most of the stories, yet the characters still lack complexity. But that’s ultimately not important. You want to read — and re-read — these stories for the beauty, fluidity and power of Umezawa’s writing. You want to read them because they’re funny or scary or just plain fascinating.

A female snow demon returns to punish a man who broke his childhood promise that he would never reveal he had seen her. A fisherman prevents a heavenly maiden from returning home. A samurai returns to visit his sworn brother on the appointed date, despite a major obstacle. An evil man poisons his wife, only to have her spirit return to prevent him from remarrying. A foolish monk is tricked by a demon into visiting the past. A trickster snake-oil salesman is himself tricked by demons. A lazy fisherman’s son visits the underwater palace of the Dragon King. A nasty, jealous man tries to emulate everything his good brother does, with vastly different results.

If you recognize some of these stories, that’s not unusual because the characters and themes in them — as in all fairy tales and folktales, no matter what their country of origin — are universal.

Cheryl Freedman is a freelance editor in Toronto.
What if you could keep good people from ever getting sick, while protecting them, even if it costs him the election?

friends in peril, she has to make a decision. Will she defy her father to ensure that bad things only happen to bad people have put her new ministerial candidate, lives in. When she realizes that the efforts to remove diseases from the sick by transferring them to other living humans — namely criminals.

This is the world that 16-year-old Talia Hale, daughter of a prime ministerial candidate, lives in. When she realizes that the efforts to remove diseases from the sick by transferring them to other living humans — namely criminals.

Verdopolis. A magnificent realm of royal balls and sweeping romances, of political intrigues and scandalous affairs, and a realm of sinister back alleys and dastardly rogues and reprobates. It is an imaginary world that has been conjured into existence by Charlotte and Branwell Brontë. Together these siblings have invented an entire kingdom and its myriad of complex characters. However, not only have they written this world into being, they have also made a bargain that has brought their fictitious creation to life and given them the ability to travel between the real world and their invented one.

The two elder Brontës once included their younger sisters, Emily and Anne, in their mystical journeys, but that has changed. Now Emily yearns to accompany them, or better yet, to create her own world, a darker, moodier, but still wildly beautiful place that she would call Gondal. Ultimately, all four siblings learn the terrible truth about just how much their otherworldly visits cost them. Can they find a way to undo the dark magic that binds them to their fictional landscapes?

Lena Coakley combines history and fantasy in an exquisite tale that re-imagines the childhoods of the Brontë siblings. It is an intricate and compelling story that weaves biographical elements into a fairy tale-like fantasy that is both beguiling and almost believable. Her descriptions are lush and beautiful, and her characters are vividly depicted: complex, imperfect and vulnerable. The relationships between the siblings are carefully explored, as is the intense connection between a writer and his or her characters.

A gorgeously crafted literary gem, this book has a clever plot and genuine characters, and provides cunning and thought-provoking insights on writing and on a writer’s mind and heart.

Lisa Doucet

Finding Hope
written by Colleen Nelson
Dundurn, 2016
978-1-45973-245-2 (pb) $12.99
978-1-45973-247-6 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Addiction | Sexual Abuse | Bullying

For 15-year-old Hope, staying in her small town means being forever stuck in a place with nothing to do and nowhere to go. With a drug addict for a brother, she stays sane by writing poetry. When she’s offered the chance to attend Ravenhurst Academy as a boarder, she jumps at the opportunity for a fresh start. At first, it’s better than she could have dreamed, but when her brother shows up at school, desperate for help, and the cliquish Ravens turn on her, Hope has to find a way to keep her own life from spiralling out of control.

In her new novel, author Colleen Nelson explores themes of drugs, sexual abuse, bullying and digital dangers through the alternating viewpoints of Hope and her meth-addicted brother, Eric. Once a star hockey player with pro potential, Eric is now homeless and a shell of the boy he was. As the author gradually reveals the cataclysmic event that drove him to addiction, Eric’s thoughts are disjointed.

In Hope, readers see a girl who is equally lost. Desperate to fit in at her new school, she finds herself pushing the limits of what she will do and say, learning a painful lesson about how her words can be twisted and used against her. Her poems are simple, yet revealing, and readers’ hearts will be breaking for her as her world falls apart. The characters are flawed, complex and realistically portrayed.

Nelson does an excellent job of demonstrating how ordinary families are torn apart by drug addiction, but that there can be a way back. The prose is simple, yet elegant, and readers will appreciate the dual meaning of the title, in Hope’s self-discovery, and the literal need for the characters to find hope. While the subject makes for a harrowing read, fans of gritty, realistic fiction will be drawn for a harrowing read, fans of gritty, realistic fiction will be drawn to this novel, and will find themselves hoping that both characters can be saved.

Rachel Seigel

Worlds of Ink and Shadow
written by Lena Coakley
HarperCollins Canada, 2016
978-1-4434-1659-7 (hc) $19.99
for Grades 8 to 12

Fiction | Fantasy | Magic | Brontë Family

Finding Hope
written by Colleen Nelson
Dundurn, 2016
978-1-45973-245-2 (pb) $12.99
978-1-45973-247-6 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Addiction | Sexual Abuse | Bullying

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Rachel Seigel

Transferral
written by Kate Blair
Dancing Cat Books, 2015
978-1-77086-454-2 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Dystopia | Alternate Realities | Privilege | Social Inequality | Justice

In an alternate version of present day London, there is one key difference in the world.

Medical science has found a way to remove diseases from the sick by transferring them to other living humans — namely criminals. This is the world that 16-year-old Talia Hale, daughter of a prime ministerial candidate, lives in. When she realizes that the efforts to ensure that bad things only happen to bad people have put her new friends in peril, she has to make a decision. Will she defy her father to protect them, even if it costs him the election?

What if you could keep good people from ever getting sick, while fighting crime at the same time? Imagine if instead of jail, criminals are sentenced to illnesses ranging from the flu to meningitis, depending on the crime. Is it a solution to a problem, or the cause of the problem? These are questions protagonist Talia begins to examine in Kate Blair’s chilling debut novel.

Talia is an intelligent, resourceful teen with a strong sense of justice. Having lost her mother and sister to a violent crime when she was younger, she has always believed in “the system.” The system is there to protect the people and keep them safe. When she saves a girl around her sister’s age from a seemingly dangerous criminal, she discovers that the system is not as perfect as it seems.

The book is unique, well paced, engaging and insightful; themes of class divide, poverty, justice and loyalty take centre stage. Blair deftly examines how efforts to make something right can go terribly wrong, and highlights the challenges of standing up for your convictions even when that means potentially hurting the people you care about most.

Rachel Seigel
A Beginner’s Guide to Immortality: From Alchemy to Avatars
written by Maria Birmingham
illustrated by Josh Holinaty
Owlkids Books, 2015
978-1-77147-045-2 (hc) $17.95
for Grades 3 to 7
Non-fiction | Immortality | Death | Myths | Religion | Technology

The Fountain of Youth. Cryonics. Yogurt. What do they have in common? Depending on whom you ask, they could be the key to eternal life. A Beginner’s Guide to Immortality looks at the many different ways humans have tried (and failed) to cheat death over the course of history — as well as some that are yet to be explored.

Maria Birmingham chronicles humanity’s search for immortality, interspersing legends and folklore from across world cultures with modern scientific knowledge. She looks at examples that range from ancient Greece, China and Mesopotamia, up to modern stories like The Lord of the Rings and Tuck Everlasting. Moving into the future, she explores the science of aging and the possibilities opened up by emerging technology — like the prospect of one day uploading your brain to a computer.

This book is indeed a beginner’s guide, jumping rapidly between topics without going into too much detail. Still, it manages to pack an impressive variety of information into under 50 pages, making it a great introduction to a subject not often covered in children’s non-fiction.

Josh Holinaty’s monochromatic illustrations don’t add new information, but they do provide a lightness that keeps the subject matter from getting too serious. This is supported by Birmingham’s matter-of-fact tone, equally conversational when discussing the health benefits of dark chocolate or the possibility of an afterlife.

A Beginner’s Guide to Immortality seamlessly blends history, mythology, science and technology into a single volume to take on the question “how can we live forever?” The answer is, we can’t — at least, not yet.

Ian Usher studies English at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community
written by Robin Stevenson
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-0993-2 (pb) $24.95
978-1-4598-0995-6 (eBook) $24.95
for Grades 5 and up
Non-fiction | Gay Pride Celebrations | LGBTQ | Family Relationships | Community | Diversity | Coming Out | LGBTQ Rights | Gay Liberation Movement

Robin Stevenson’s Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community offers readers an insightful introduction to this celebration of contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) lives and communities around the world. Pride is a lot more than just “rainbow flags and colourful outfits.”

To structure her book, Stevenson neatly uses a series of questions to ask exactly what it is that makes Pride meaningful. She starts
Stay Strong: A Musician’s Journey from Congo (Arrivals)
written by Natalie Hyde
Clockwise Press, 2015
978-0-9939351-2-1 (pb) $12.95
978-0-9939351-3-8 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 7 to 9
Non-fiction | Music | Immigration | War | Inspiration

Fleeing an impending war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly known as Zaire), young Gentil, his mother and his siblings travel to join their father in Rwanda. Once there, Gentil grows up as a refugee, watching and waiting for Congo to become habitable again. Ten years and two wars later, a new conflict forces Gentil and his uncle Fred to seek refuge in Uganda before his family decides at last to emigrate to Canada. Throughout his turbulent childhood, Gentil clings to an intense love of music, finding solace in learning various instruments and using his considerable musical abilities to make his way in the world.

The first book in Clockwise Press’s Arrivals series, Stay Strong is the true story of Gentil Misigarô’s long journey to calling Canada home after years of moving around a conflicted Africa. Despite the continually challenging circumstances in his life, Gentil pursues his passion for music in various ways, using his talents to help and encourage others.

Author Natalie Hyde explores Gentil’s complicated history with sensitivity, showing how his background helped him become the thoughtful person he was when he came to Canada. Since his immigration, Gentil has taught students to find strength in music as well, and shares his experiences through his original compositions.

Printed in a dyslexia-friendly font and with Gentil’s strong online presence, his tale is accessible to middle grade readers, inspiring all to care about their communities and make the most of any opportunities that come their way.

Jeffrey Canton

Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City
edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale
Annick Press, 2015
978-1-55451-751-0 (hc) $24.95
978-1-55451-750-3 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 7 and up
Non-fiction | First Nations | Native Americans | Urban Communities | Family Relationships | Diversity | Identity | Acceptance | Stereotypes | Racism

In this compelling sequel to their award-winning anthology, Dreaming in Indian, Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale bring together poems and song lyrics, personal stories, interviews, original artwork and photographs as well as deeply poignant meditations on the lives of Aboriginal teens and youth living, not on the rez, but in urban communities across Canada and the United States. While these young people certainly don’t shy away from addressing some of the difficult issues that they face as First Nations/Native Americans — being stereotyped, dealing with the legacy of trauma perpetuated by the Residential School system and confronting abuse, racism, marginalization and oppression — this is also a book that celebrates new business initiatives, incredible creativity and the development of exciting new approaches to fostering Indigenous communities and lifestyles in the urban landscape of the 21st century.

Beginning with Joseph Boyden’s moving introduction about coming to terms with his own Indigenous identity as a 1970s punk rocker, the 30 pieces that Charleyboy and Leatherdale bring together stunningly deal with the challenges of the contemporary education system, how these young people are building careers as actors, musicians, artists and activists amongst others and explore how diverse these young people are in their approaches to re-imagining the world through a mixing of the uniqueness of their indigeneity and contemporary Western culture and ideas. Urban Tribes provides readers with the unique opportunity to hear from young people themselves about how they are changing the face of the world from an Indigenous perspective.

Jeffrey Canton

BBKT Correction

In the Fall 2015 issue of Best Books for Kids & Teens, an incorrect annotation appeared for Delusion Road written by Don Aker, a Starred Selection. A corrected version will appear in the Spring 2016 issue of BBKT.

Jeffrey Canton
The Weight of a Feather

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Shortlisted: Forest of Reading Silver Birch Award, Moonbeam Children’s Book Award, CCBC Best Books for Kids & Teens Award, Manitoba Young Readers’ Choice Award

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Edward Keenan, Julie McLaughlin

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(CitizenKid)
Jessica Dee Humphreys, Michel Chikwanine, Claudia Dávila

My Girlfriend’s Pregnant! A Teen’s Guide to Becoming a Dad
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The Artist and Me
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Swan: The Life and Dance of Anna Pavlova
Laurel Snyder, Julie Morstad

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WE RECOMMEND

Are You Seeing Me?
Darren Groth

A Beginner’s Guide to Immortality: From Alchemy to Avatars
Maria Birmingham, Josh Holinaty

The Blackthorn Key (Blackthorn Key, Book 1)
Kevin Sands

A Book of Spirits and Thieves
Morgan Rhodes

A Change of Heart
Alice Walsh, Erin Bennett Banks

Cherry Blossom Baseball (A Cherry Blossom Book, Book 3)
Jennifer Maruno

Clover’s Luck (Magical Animal Adoption Agency, Book 1)
Kallie George, Alexandra Boiger

The Enchanted Egg (Magical Animal Adoption Agency, Book 2)
Kallie George, Alexandra Boiger

Finding Hope
Colleen Nelson

Hope’s Journey (Forging a Nation, Book 5)
Jean Rae Baxter

Malaika’s Costume
Nadia L. Hohn, Irene Luxbacher

Myles and the Monster Outside (Weird Stories Gone Wrong, Book 2)
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Once Upon a Line
Wallace Edwards

Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community
Robin Stevenson

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Today Is the Day
Eric Walters, Eugenie Fernandes

Transferral
Kate Blair

Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City
Lisa Charleyboy, Mary Beth Leatherdale (ed.)

West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet
Deborah Hodge, Karen Reczuch

The White Cat and the Monk: A Retelling of the Poem “Pangur Bán”
Jo Ellen Bogart, Sydney Smith

Worlds of Ink and Shadow
Lena Coakley

A Year of Borrowed Men
Michelle Barker, Renné Benoit

Young Man With Camera
Emil Sher, David Wyman (photography)
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